

IISEPS News
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Dear readers!

The next – jubilee! – 25th issue of the analytical bulletin "IISEPS News" offers to your attention materials reflecting the most interesting results of the Institute's work in the third quarter of 2002.

V. Putin's statements about further development of the Russia-Belarus integration became the most significant event, which agitated public-political life within this period. In this respect, political prospects of A. Lukashenko, the opposition and the country as a whole reshaped. The reaction by the Belarus president (reinforced with the might of the entire state information-propagandistic machine), who instantly turned into an advocate of state sovereignty and national pride of Belarusians, provoked numerous questions and doubts, hopes and blunt speculations, both in Belarus and abroad. Is A. Lukashenko in fact likely to follow the path of "national salvation", consolidation of Belarus' society, rapprochement with the West or to continue (begin another) integration game? The choice of the right strategy for the Belarusian opposition, Russia's leadership and the West depends on the right answer to these questions. Thus, the given bulletin is mostly devoted to the integration issue.

The issue of integration, however, "raises" another closely related topic – a drop in A. Lukashenko's popularity rating, a further divergence of public and authorities in Belarus. As a matter of fact, that was the key reason for a sudden turn in Russia-Belarus relations (as G. Pavlovsky, the President of the Efficient Policy Foundation and an aide to the Russian president, tactfully noted, "that's the reason why Russia had to specify the balance of its relations with Belarus"). The statements by the Belarus president made on NTV television on September 9 (which in fact became an open challenge to V. Putin), as well as during the September 17 press conference in Minsk (about a possible referendum on introducing changes to the Constitution allowing him to be elected the president for the third term), clearly say that the integration is not so much an issue of foreign, as of home policy process.

The results of the latest IISEPS national public opinion poll, presented in the given issue as figures, tables, trends as well as analytical materials, make evident not only the president's still falling rating (about 1% a month), but also an absolutely different public attitude towards the integration with Russia (including the variants suggested by V. Putin), than declared by the head of state.

Hence, in particular, one could suppose that under such course of events not just reelection, but retention of his powers until the next presidential election might become a real problem for A. Lukashenko. In a word, there is enough pabulum for reflection of analysts, journalists, politicians, diplomats and all those interested in public-political life in Belarus.

Nonetheless, no matter what facts and events are recorded by IISEPS's studies, they could be viewed in different ways. In order to keep objective information not "overshadowed" by analysis (which, if you please, can be claimed "engaged", "ordered", etc.), we introduced the rubric "Open Forum". Our readers have had the opportunity to familiarize with different points of view of leading Belarusian politicians, experts and diplomats, which often do not coincide with our opinions. This time, since the integration is the key subject of the bulletin, "Open Forum" is given to prominent Russian expert (head of the Belarus Department at the NIS Institute) Professor Alexander Fadeyev. We think his analysis would be of great interest to our readers.

The Appendix contains another Regulation of the Belarusian Council of Ministers (#1174 dated August 29, 2002) which shifts the process of establishing control of state authorities over independent social studies to a "working" stage: it defines the place of the control mechanism in the system of state authorities, the terms of its "switching on" and those responsible for its realization. We believe that these minor, in terms of global problems (falling life standards, the country's isolation, the threat of losing sovereignty, etc.) decisions by Belarus' authorities could in fact cause almost the same damage to our society and the state as social conflicts or natural upheavals, because they take control not of sociology and mass media, but public opinion.

We hope that the jubilee issue of our bulletin would be interesting and helpful to you and your colleagues. We are awaiting your comments and requests!

IISEPS Board

STRENGTHENING ROLE OF INDEPENDENT SOCIAL RESEARCH AND EXPERTS' NETWORKS IN BELARUS

In September 2002 in the framework of the project "Strengthening Role of Independent Social Research and Experts' Network in Belarus" ISEPS conducted a nation public opinion poll (those face-to-face interviewed – 1509 persons aged 18 and over, margin of error does not exceed 0.03). The questionnaire covered a wide range of problems related to the most pressing and most topical aspects of life in Belarus.

Below you will find commentaries to the most important findings of the poll made by ISEPS experts. "No answer" and "Find it difficult to answer" alternatives are excluded from some tables. In several tables the total amount may be different from 100% as the interviewees could choose more than one alternative. Certain findings of the poll were traditionally represented with regard to the basic social-demographic groups and without commentaries. As before, we traditionally present the major trends of the public opinion's basic social parameters.

Collapse. A. Lukashenko's rating continues to fall

This past spring ISEPS recorded a slump in A. Lukashenko's popularity rating – from 46% in October to 30.9% in April. Such a "collapse" (as the president would say) caused various processes both in domestic and foreign political markets – from public dismissal of members of the Belarusian government to fundamental changes in Russia-Belarus relations. We shall remind that right after V. Putin's statement on June 14 about the necessity to "separate flies from cutlets" the President of the Efficient Policy Foundation G. Pavlovsky said literally the following: "With respect to the Union there is such a notion "political correctness", because we all know that the rating of the Belarus president is falling. That is neither good, nor bad. That is the fact. That is the key reason why Russia had to specify the balance of its relations with Belarus". The reaction by the Belarus president, who instantly turned into an advocate of state sovereignty and national pride of Belarusians, provoked numerous questions and doubts, hopes and blunt speculations, both in Belarus and abroad. Many expected a "new course" to expand A. Lukashenko's electoral base and his authority to rise. And what about today's attitude of the Belarusian electorate towards the president?

As one could see from Table 1, the president (and therefore his policy) does not enjoy support of the majority. Moreover, within four months his rating dropped 4% (in Minsk it went down from 27.5% to 22.4%). Today most Belarusians say they are not satisfied with A. Lukashenko's ruling (See Table 2).

Table 1

Electorate's attitude towards A. Lukashenko

Indexes of attitude towards A. Lukashenko	%
Would have voted for A. Lukashenko at a new presidential election*	27.0
Would have voted for A. Lukashenko at an election of Russia-Belarus president *	15.0
Trust the President	36.1
Consider A. Lukashenko an ideal politician	23.2

** Answer to an open question (i.e. the respondents wrote down politician's name)*

Table 2

Distribution of answers to the question "Are you satisfied with A. Lukashenko's ruling?"

Variant of answer	%
Rather satisfied	12.9
Partially satisfied	26.2
Partially dissatisfied	20.7
Rather dissatisfied	36.5

Estimation of his activity, which was growing during the first term of his presidency, is falling again (See Table 3).

Table 3

**Dynamics of estimation of the Belarus president's work
(on 5-grade scale)**

Time of questioning	1	2	3	4	5	Average grade
11'94	20.8	19.7	34.9	17.0	6.4	2.65
09'00	13.8	13.4	33.2	24.2	14.3	3.09
09'02	17.6	20.5	30.7	21.1	8.3	2.82

After the September 17 press conference of the president many in Belarus and abroad ask themselves the question: what are A. Lukashenko's chances to be reelected for the third term, which, as the president put it, is possible "only if we have a proper Constitutional norm. And that article of the Constitution falls under referendum. That means only by means of a referendum?" And we asked Belarusians about it (See Table 4).

Table 4

Distribution of answers to the question "If there were a referendum on changing the Constitution of Belarus to make A. Lukashenko eligible for the third term of presidency, how would you vote?"

Variant of answer	%
Would vote for such changes	15.5
Would vote against such changes	50.6
Do not know at the moment, would judge by circumstances	25.4
Would not take part in the referendum	7.2
NA	1.3

A deeper analysis shows that considering presumable reaction of the undetermined (according to a long-term monitoring of electoral behavior, the majority of those undetermined joins a dominant determined group at polling stations), if such a referendum were to take place tomorrow, from 52% to 60% of Belarusians would have probably voted against such amendments to the Constitution. During the last year the public's negative reaction to this idea increased (See Table 5).

Which factors determine the choice of voters: to vote at a hypothetical referendum for the possibility of reelecting A. Lukashenko or against it?

Table 5

Dynamics of attitude towards the Constitutional norm banning A. Lukashenko from being elected for the third consecutive term, %

Variant of answer	10'01	09'02
Positive. I think the restriction should be lifted	23.4	23.7
Negative. I think the restriction should be kept	52.7	58.0
DA/NA	23.9	18.3

A comparative analysis of these antagonistic groups of Belarus' electorate on social-demographic profile revealed almost no critical differences (by which different attitudes towards reelecting A. Lukashenko could be explained) between them. As we assumed, there are more women among those ready to vote for such amendments to the Constitution, than men, people with low education level, aged people, pensioners, Orthodox believers, residents of towns and villages having low incomes. On the contrary, among those who are ready to vote against such amendments to the Constitution there are more people with a higher level of education, youth, students and those working in the private economy sector, Protestants, residents of the capital and regional centers having higher incomes. If we do not take into account expected differences among pensioners (dominated by those ready to vote for) and students (dominated by those ready to vote against) critical differences are revealed only among the respondents with the lowest and highest levels of education.

The language factor showed itself in a special way. 29.1% of those respondents who speak the Belarusian language in everyday life are ready to support changing the Constitution, with 41.2% against; among those who speak the mixed "trasyanka" the ratio is 18.4% to 45.8%; among those who speak both languages – 15.9% to 46.2%; and among those who speak Russian – 11.6% to 57.0%! That is a further evidence of the conclusion, which we drew several years ago: in Belarus the spoken language became not so much a cultural, as demographic factor.

Material-economic factors have a stronger influence on the choice of Belarusians than social-demographic factors. For example, 21.8% of those who say their life has improved since 1994 are ready to support changing the Constitution, whereas 47.7% are against; while among those who answer in the opposite the ratio is 10.4% to 59.5%. Among those who have faced no backpays in wages or pensions during the last year 22.4% are ready to vote for changing the Constitution, while among those who face the problem almost monthly the figure is 9.1%.

Among the respondents with incomes per family member in August below 85,000 rubles the ratio is 19.6% to 43.2%; among the respondents with incomes above 140,000 rubles – 4.8% to 67.5%.

Another important factor was Belarusians' attitude towards observance of law (or "justice" as people would say). So, among those who believe that "during A. Lukashenko's ruling powers and arbitrariness of state officials have decreased" the given ratio is 29.8% to 39.2%, and among those who think "powers and arbitrariness have increased" – 7.1% to 67.9%. Among those who believe that "all are equal before the law in our country, and a perpetrator will account for it" the ratio is 34.9% to 33.3%, and among those who think that "those who hold high posts could avoid punishment for committed crimes" – 10.7% to 61.4%! From this point of view the recent raid against non-state press in the form of court trials against Pagonya, Nasha Svaboda, Narodnaya Volya, Rabochy, caused a reverse effect. If among those who believe that "they were treated fairly" (because "they published false information about authorities' activity"), the given ratio is 33.7% to 36.4%, among those who consider it unfair – it is 7.0% to 74.2%! That is what explains the lowest rating of law enforcement agencies among all other state institutions: today 26.5% of Belarusians trust courts (49.6% distrust), 22.2% trust police (57.3% distrust)!

However, the most significant factor determining Belarusians' attitude to the third presidential term of A. Lukashenko by means of changing the Constitution was their awareness of ...the president's real rating and his possible rival! Among those who believe that "during the 2001 presidential election A. Lukashenko's rating (i.e. the population's readiness to vote for him at the next presidential election) rose" 51.1% are ready to support such amendments to the Constitution (14.0% – against), and among those who think it dropped – only 4.7% (71.7% – against). If we consider these groups from "a different side", the picture is even more impressive. So, among the respondents ready to vote for the third term 56.6% believe that during the past year the president's rating rose, and only 18.1% – dropped. But among those against changing the Constitution the ratio is 4.7% to 84.6%!!! Among those who "do not know a candidate able to compete with A. Lukashenko at a presidential election" 46.2% are ready to vote against changing the Constitution, and 77.9% among those who know such a candidate.

On the basis of the above facts one could suppose with a high degree of probability that if the absolute majority of Belarusians knew about A. Lukashenko's falling rating and imagined his possible rival, there would have been no chances of introducing such amendments to the Constitution. (We shall note that such proposal does not take into account the factor of political control allowing authorities to demonstrate necessary results at any election). In this context the maniacal desire of Belarusian authorities to put independent public opinion research centers and independent press making public findings of such centers under control seems quite explicable. So, among those who believe that "the authorities shall control study and formation of public opinion" 39.2% are ready to vote for changing the Constitution (29.6% – against), and among those who think that "study and formation of public opinion shall be free" the given ratio is 7.3% to 67.0%! The authorities, as we see, are ready even to infringe upon public sense of justice for the sake of retaining information control, and finally, the power.

What is the prognosis? We shall take the risk of assuming that if influence of material-economic (deteriorating living standards), legal (law violation) and, especially, information factors (for example,

objective information about the state of affairs in the country via Russia's TV channels) is not pulled up, the Belarus president's rating is likely to continue its downtrend. Based on the pace of its recent "easy" falling – approximately 1% a month (not taking into account the collapse during the first six months after the election) – we shall expect it to drop to 15% in a year, which is usually considered a critical threshold for a head of state. Under such course of events not so much reelection for the third term, as retention of his powers until the next presidential election could become a real problem for A. Lukashenko.

Attitude of Belarusians towards the integration with Russia

Based on the results of ISEPS studies, with a high degree of probability we could assume that regardless of numerous statements, A. Lukashenko and his team are unable to carry out the "new course" (including Minsk's unexpected readiness to receive even the Pope!), being actively promoted by the entire state propagandistic machine. First of all because the president has no electoral resources for that purpose. All the eight years of his presidency he has constantly exploited the image of the "gatherer of Slavic land", Orthodox "adherent" and the last "bulwark on the way of western expansion". As a result of such politics the political subjects and electoral groups which stood up for independence, democracy, denomination diversity and the European path of development were marginalized, driven into the periphery of the social-political process. That means at the moment the authorities have no electoral resources to rely on.

Although Belarus' authorities (in the person of A. Lukashenko, L. Kozik, L. Yermoshina, etc.) claim today that there is no point (it is impossible, illegal, etc.) in organizing in Belarus a referendum on V. Putin's proposals, many still wonder: but what if such referendum takes place? Of course, a lot will depend on the position of Belarusian authorities. The 1999 local election, the 2000 parliamentary election and the presidential election of 2001 showed that the authorities possess a powerful factor of political control. That means if they are really interested in "the national approval of the course for independence", the necessary results would be demonstrated. If we disengage from the factor of political control and consider public opinion, it is not like that presented by the authorities (See Table 6).

A deeper analysis shows that considering presumable reaction of the undetermined (according to a long-term monitoring of electoral behavior, the majority of those undetermined joins a dominant determined group at polling stations), if such a referendum were to take place tomorrow, at least 50% of Belarusians would probably support the proposal of the Russian president.

Table 6

Distribution of answers to the question "Russia's president suggested to hold in spring 2003 a referendum on the following question: "Do you agree with Russia and Belarus uniting into a single state on the following principles:

a/ ensuring parity of rights and freedoms of citizens of the united state;

b/ parity of the regions of the Russian Federation and Belarus as subjects of the common state;

c/ establishment of common governing bodies in line with the Russian Constitution?"

If there were such a referendum, how would you vote?", %

Variant of answer	All respondents	A. Lukashenko's supporters*	A. Lukashenko's opponents*
I would say I agree	32.3	41.7	27.0
I would say I disagree	26.3	22.4	37.2
Do not know at the moment, would judge by circumstances	31.7	29.5	28.5
Would not take part in the referendum	8.0	6.4	7.2

** Convinced supporters are those who are ready to vote for A. Lukashenko at the Belarus presidential election and the presidential election of the Russia-Belarus Union, who trust him and consider him an ideal politician. Convinced opponents are those who distrust the president and choose another politician on all other issues.*

A comparative analysis of those who agree and disagree with V. Putin's proposal on social-

demographic profile revealed almost no critical differences (by which different attitudes towards the integration could be explained) between these groups of the Belarusian society. As we assumed, there are more women among those who agree, than men, people with low education level, aged people, pensioners, residents of towns and villages having low incomes. On the contrary, among those who disagree there are more people with a higher level of education, youth, students, residents of the capital and regional centers having higher incomes. If we do not take into account expected differences among pensioners (dominated by those who agree) and students (dominated by those who disagree), critical differences are revealed only among representatives of different religions (those who agree dominate among Orthodox believers, those who disagree – among Catholics, and especially Protestants) and respondents with different national identification. The respondents who believe that Belarusians do not differ from Russians are dominated by those who agree, while those who disagree more often see differences in language, culture, psychology and history. The same analysis of those who refuse to take part in the referendum or have not made their choice yet revealed no significant differences on these criteria – the social-demographic profile of these groups coincides with the profile of the entire representation.

The respondents' attitude towards President A. Lukashenko and his policy is a more important characteristic of Belarusians' attitude towards the integration with Russia. As we see from Table 6, A. Lukashenko's convinced supporters dominate those who agree with V. Putin's offer, among those who disagree – his opponents. Unlike three years ago, the given distribution is not mirror-like. That means that negative attitude towards A. Lukashenko is in no strict correlation to negative attitude towards the integration. We have repeatedly written that the most important factor of this fundamental shift in Belarusians' mass consciousness is V. Putin and his policy (especially since the beginning of Russia's active rapprochement with the West), which are viewed as a real and acceptable alternative to A. Lukashenko and his policy. Thus, with a high degree of probability we could assume that if Russia's leadership openly and clearly gives Belarusians to understand that the policy of A. Lukashenko does not suit it any longer, positive feelings towards Russia are likely to grow even more in Belarus.

Table 7

Distribution of answers to the question "If as a result of the referendum Belarus becomes a part of the Russian Federation, how most probably would you act?" (answers of those who chose options "agree" and "would not take part" to the previous question), %

Variant of answer	All respondents	A. Lukashenko's supporters	A. Lukashenko's opponents
I would accept it, because the results of the referendum could not be changed	29.5	25.4	30.3
I would take part in mass protest actions (rallies, demonstrations, strikes) to try to change the results	7.9	2.1	13.8
I would move to a different country	2.4	0	4.9
I would be ready to stand up for Belarus' independence with arms	2.1	0.4	2.9
DA	11.2	12.9	10.2

Therefore, national-democratic forces shall not flatter themselves that the dominant group of A. Lukashenko's convinced opponents would have voted against the proposal of V. Putin. The hopes that those who disagree with such results of the referendum, guided by the national idea or appeals by the president, will come out in the streets, thereby "standing up to protect the Fatherland", are rather doubtful (See Table 7).

Today the majority of Belarusians is ready to take part in the Union State parliamentary election, which, according to V. Putin's proposal, could be carried out in autumn of 2003 (See Table 8).

Strengthening Belarus' independence, in our opinion, has nothing in common with a false and provoking dilemma formulated by some ideologists of the national-democratic movement five years ago (and currently upheld by many opponents of both national and democratic idea) – "dictatorship in independent Belarus is better, that democracy within Russia". Clearly, in real time and place (i.e. with the present start positions) Belarus could hardly return to Europe, "escaping" from Russia, as countries of the Central and Eastern Europe did (and still do). Neither the majority of Belarusians,

nor Russia itself would support such aspirations. That, however, does not necessarily mean that the future of Belarusian is only within Russia. Such variant seems acceptable (for different, sometimes diametrically opposite reasons) neither for many Belarusians, nor for many Russians. A real variant – which suits the majority of Belarusians and Russians, and the international community – is returning to Europe together with Russia by means of strengthening democracy, market economy, law-abiding state in both countries, good neighborly relations and coordinated actions on the international arena. And under President V. Putin, especially after his public statements about the future of the Russia-Belarus integration, this variant becomes not simply "more acceptable", but quite real. First of all, because there is – for the first time! – a serious electoral resource for that purpose. (See Table 9).

Table 8

Distribution of answers to the question "If there were an election to the Union Parliament, would you take part in it?"

Variant of answer	All respondents	A. Lukashenko's supporters	A. Lukashenko's opponents
Yes	60.9	68.0	58.3
No	17.3	7.5	24.4
DA	21.8	24.5	17.3

Table 9

Distribution of answers to the question "V. Putin has recently harshly criticized the approaches of the Belarusian leadership to the integration of Belarus and Russia, and during the latest meeting with A. Lukashenko in the Kremlin he has offered to choose from two variants: to unite on the principles of the European Union (each state remains independent, and relies on itself), or Belarus shall become a part of the Russian Federation (and receive assistance on equal rights with other Russia's regions). Which of these variants do you support?", %

Variant of answer	All respondents	A. Lukashenko's supporters	A. Lukashenko's opponents
Integration of the principles of the European Union	48.5	28.6	64.5
Integration by means of Belarus becoming part of Russia	21.9	28.6	17.7
DA	29.6	41.8	17.8

Since "the integration on the EU principles" seems not quite clear to many Belarusians and Russians, (how two countries could efficiently cooperate on such principles, if they are unequal in their resources, character of public-political and social-economic system? Why creating another Union on the border with the existing European Union Russia tries to join?), aspirations of the majority of Belarusians to enter Europe could be used for the integration in line with this variant (See Table 10).

Table 10

Distribution of answers to the question "If tomorrow there were a referendum on Belarus' accession to the European Union, how would you vote?", %

Variant of answer	All respondents	A. Lukashenko's supporters	A. Lukashenko's opponents
For	53.4	28.0	69.6
Against	8.1	21.5	3.9
Would not vote	13.0	17.2	8.9
DA	25.5	33.2	17.6

We could assume that in case an alternative to A. Lukashenko is found and realized, if a centrist, who will not trade in sovereignty, but will ensure stability of Russian interests here (in particular, pipelines, branches of Beltransgaz are meant) comes to power, Belarus will suit Russia as a good neighbor and a reliable ally, and talks about the total unification would cease. In this case the integration of Belarus and Russia would become a part of the European integration process with support of both nations, as well as peoples of other countries.

Local election – "spiral of silence" untwines

The elections to local Councils will take place in Belarus next spring. Only one fifth of the respondents knows when they are to take place. However, that does not mean there is no interest in these elections.

As we see from Table 11, today 60% of the respondents say they are ready to take part in local elections. That is one third more than a month before the March 1999 elections, when, according to our data, the same 60% participated (according to the data of the Central Election Commission – 64% of those having right to vote). And if we take into account the fact that out of 20% of those who find it difficult to answer the majority is inclined to participate, one could suppose that next spring we will see a high turnout.

But why not now? What are the reasons why a part of voters does not want to go to polling stations? Table 12 gives an idea about it.

Table 11

Distribution of answers to the question "Are you going to take part in the election to local Councils?", %

Variant of answer	03'99	09'02
Yes	45.0	60.3
No	20.0	20.3
Do not know yet	34.0	—*
DA/NA	1.0	19.4

*The option was omitted in the given questionnaire

Table 12

Distribution of answers to the question "If you are not going to vote, then why?", %

(more than one answer is possible)

Variant of answer	All respondents	Supporters* of A. Lukashenko	Opponents* of A. Lukashenko
No matter how do you vote, the candidates who enjoy support of the authorities would become deputies	12.2	4.3	16.2
There is no worthy candidate to support	8.1	2.3	11.5
I doubt the elections would be free and fair	8.6	3.6	12.2
It is useless to vote, because local Councils have no powers	9.8	4.2	13.7
I do not care about it	7.0	4.3	7.8
Let those who understand the situation vote	5.1	7.7	2.9
Other	1.8	2.4	1.2

* Convinced supporters are those who are ready to vote for A. Lukashenko at the Belarus presidential election and the presidential election of the Russia-Belarus Union, who trust him and consider him an ideal politician. Convinced opponents are those who distrust the president and choose another politician on all other issues

Table 13

Distribution of answers to the questions about nature of the future voting, %

Variant of answer	For what candidate would you prefer to vote?		For whom, do you think, the majority of voters would vote?	
	04'02	09'02	04'02	09'02
For a candidate-supporter of A. Lukashenko	29.2	27.9	49.5	35.0
For a candidate-opponent of A. Lukashenko	28.3	30.8	16.5	25.3
For another candidate	15.2	16.5	6.6	7.4
DA/NA	27.3	24.8	27.4	32.3

This time, as in April, distrust tops the list. Voters do not believe that the strongest candidate will win the race – more than 12% of the respondents (16.2% among the president's opponents) think that candidates who enjoy support of the authorities are likely to become deputies. If we add those

who do not believe in a free and fair election, it turns out that 20% of all the respondents and about 30% of A. Lukashenko's opponents are ready to ignore the elections because they doubt that would be real elections, which depend only on voters' will. At the same time we shall note that as compared to the last year A. Lukashenko's opponents look more optimistic – among them the number of those who have no doubts the authorities would be able to push their proteges to local Councils dropped by 5%.

Previously we have repeatedly stated that a considerable part of voters have no enough information about candidates and their programs, and as a result they vote "at random". Nonetheless, they make their choice on the basis of other criteria, having no information about the programs of candidates, or their personal features. The attitude of this or that candidate towards A. Lukashenko and his policy becomes one of the key indicators in this respect, an identification sign by which voters distinguish "their" candidates from "strangers".

And here significant changes have taken place. If in April the number of those who were going to vote for candidates-supporters of A. Lukashenko slightly exceeded the number of those ready to vote for candidates-opponents of the president, in September the situation changed (See Table 13). The amplitude of this change – 4% (from -1 in favor of supporters to +3 in favor of opponents). And that coincides with the figures of the fall of the president's rating.

However, the most considerable changes have taken place in voters' estimation of how the rest of voters would vote. In April many Belarusians speaking out for changes believed the majority would vote for candidates-supporters of A. Lukashenko (i.e. that they are in the minority), today their confidence in public support has increased. The spiral of silence repeatedly reported by ISEPS has finally begun to untwine.

Table 14

Distribution of answers to the question "If you are going to support a candidate of one of the parties, which in particular?", %

Variant of answer	04'02	09'02
Liberal-Democratic Party (S. Gaidukevich)	5.5	7.6
Women's Party Nadzeya (V. Polevikova)*	4.3	6.9
Belarusian Social-Democratic Gramada (S. Shushkevich)	3.8	2.9
United Civic Party (A. Lebedko)	3.8	3.6
Belarusian Party of Communists (S. Kalyakin)	2.7	3.3
Belarusian Social-Democratic Party Narodnaya Gramada (N. Statkevich)	2.6	2.7
Belarusian Popular Front Adradzhenne (V. Vecherko)	2.0	3.1
Conservative-Christian Party of BPF (Z. Poznyak)	1.9	2.9
Communist Party of Belarus (V. Zakharchenko)	1.7	—*
Party of Labor (A. Bukhvostov)	1.4	1.6
Other	6.2	2.9
DA/NA	64.1	62.3

**The public opinion poll was conducted before the change of Nadzeya's leadership*

Table 15

Distribution of answers to the question "Do you support the creation of a block of opposition parties for participation in the local elections?", %

Variant of answer	All respondents		A. Lukashenko's supporters		A. Lukashenko's opponents		Vacillatory	
	04'02	09'02	04'02	09'02	04'02	09'02	04'02	09'02
Yes	36.5	39.8	7.9	14.3	57.1	57.5	21.0	30.2
No	32.8	31.0	57.9	60.5	18.8	18.1	42.1	35.6
3O/HO	30.7	29.2	34.2	25.4	24.1	24.4	36.9	34.1

A. Lukashenko's electorate diminishes in number and becomes more consolidated – 89% of his supporters are going to vote for a candidate-supporter of the president, but their confidence in support of the majority is falling (only 77.8% believe the majority of voters would do the same).

The president's opponents are less consolidated – 58.6% of them prefer voting for candidates-opponents of the president, and 18.1% – for another candidate. But their confidence in support of

the majority is going up – more than half of them think the majority will support their choice.

It is noteworthy that only 32.2% of the "vacillatory" are ready to support candidates-opponents of A. Lukashenko and other candidates, and 36.2% – to vote in favor of candidates-supporters of A. Lukashenko.

Table 16

**Distribution of answers to the question
"Would you like moving to another country?"**

Variant of answer	%
I would not like moving anywhere	54.6
Germany	13.3
The USA	8.6
Poland	5.7
Russia	4.3
Baltic States	1.7
Another country	4.7

Although there is enough time before the elections, today it is clear that contradictions between the opposition parties will not allow them creating a single election block. Judging by statements of party leaders we could predict that at least two blocks – a left-centrist and a right-centrist block would nominate their candidates next spring. The first block may include communist of S. Kalyakin, social-democrats of A. Bukhvostov and N. Statkevich. Liberal-democrats of S. Gaidukevich and Nadzeya with its new leadership (which has to solve the problem of registration with the Justice Ministry first) will probably join them. The second block will most likely include the BPF "Adradzhen-nye" of V. Vechorka, the UCP of A. Lebedko and probably two social-democratic parties of S. Shushkevich and V. Polevikova (the latter also has to settle the issue of its registration).

We have repeatedly mentioned that party membership of candidates is not a determinative factor for voters' choice. Also it is still unclear whether or not voters who are ready to vote for a candidate from another party of the given block would automatically support a party member. At first sight we shall only state that the right-centrist block has a traditionally closer, more disciplined and consolidated electorate. The left-centrist block seems to have a quantitatively greater potential (See Table 14).

However, we shall not add party ratings mechanically. Still it is not clear who will gain the electorate of the split Nadzeya, or will S. Gaidukevich (who is at a certain height) join a block.

Meanwhile, we shall note that the idea of a single block enlists more and more supporters (See Table 15).

Ironically, if there are no changes on this issue among A. Lukashenko's opponents (probably, because, mostly they are politically active citizens, many of whom have settled party preferences), the support of this idea has increased 1.5fold among the "vacillatory" and almost twofold among A. Lukashenko's (!) supporters.

Do Belarusians want to the West?

As we could see from Table 16, a considerable part of our fellow citizens (almost 40%) would like moving to another country. And western, or west-oriented countries dominate the list of preferences. As for oriental countries, only Russia is mentioned. In a year its attractiveness for emigration has crept up from 3.6% to 4.3%. Hence, a significant part of Belarusians considers western values attractive, and they are even ready to leave the Fatherland.

How deep have these values penetrated into Belarusian socium, to what extent have they influenced traditional public consciousness? Tables 2–6 provide a fair idea of it. As Table 17 shows, contrary to regulations and actions by Belarus' authorities, almost half of the population (48.5%) believes that regardless of its "distinctive nature" Belarus shall uphold international standards and do not impede the activities of the OSCE.

Traditionally negative attitude towards the West as a whole and NATO in particular has changed considerably. Today 41.2% (against 31.3%) believe that NATO's eastward expansion is of no threat

to Belarus (See Table 18). Previously the ratio was diametrically opposite. Although only 27.0% advocate Belarus' accession to NATO (42.3% against it), the tendency of diminishing anti-NATO moods is evident.

Table 17

Distribution of answers to the question "There is a new crisis in the relations between Belarus and international organizations. International organizations believe that the OSCE AMG shall continue working in Belarus, whereas the Belarus authorities say "we shall not bow before the OSCE", and in fact froze the activity of this organization in our country. What, do you think, is the best way to overcome the crisis?"

Variant of answer	%
Belarus must uphold international standards, shall not impede the OSCE activities in our country	48.5
Belarus lives by its own rules, and the OSCE and other international organizations must observe them	25.6

Table 18

Dynamics of distribution of answers to the question "Does NATO's expansion pose threat to Belarus?", %

Variant of answer	06'99	11'99	04'01	09'02
Yes	17.6	20.2	23.5	41.2
No	47.7	43.7	36.8	31.3

Almost 60% of the respondent support Russia's active policy aimed at rapprochement with the West and recommend Belarus to follow the same path. Only 14.1% speak out against it. And finally, if a referendum on joining the European Union were to take place tomorrow, 53.4% of the population are ready to vote in favor of accession (See Table 19). It is worth mentioning that there has been campaigning in this respect in the country, and the official position is clearly opposite.

Table 19

Distribution of answers to the question "If tomorrow there were a referendum on Belarus' accession to the European Union, how would you vote?"

Variant of answer	%
For	53.4
Against	8.1
Would not vote	13.0

That is a further proof of the fact that western values, western way of thinking and living become more acceptable for Belarusians. Of course, the situation shall not be simplified. Many like the western level of incomes and consumption, but they do not accept the western labor moral and interpersonal relations. Nonetheless, one could state there are positive shifts in public consciousness, which take place regardless of the aggressive anti-western propaganda.

The majority of Belarusians stand up for parity of religions

Belarus is known a multi-denomination country at the crossroads between Eastern and Western civilizations and two branches of Christianity, respectively. Historically, the dominating religions in Belarus were Russian Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. However, after the bans imposed by the Soviets were abolished many other religions showed rapid growth in the number of their followers during the last decade. In this respect it would be of great interest to find out how Belarusians identify themselves with respect to religion and how they regard optimal relations between various denominations. The latter is especially important in view of coming meeting of the Council of the Republic that will consider in early October the amendments to the "Law on the freedom of religion and religious organizations" that earlier generated very contradictory reactions of many political figures, re-

ligious heads and the very believers.

As we could see from Table 20, more than two thirds of the respondents identify themselves as Orthodox believers, their number for the last year and a half increased by 10%. The number of Catholics and Protestants has also grown during the mentioned period. Protestantism is often said to be the most rapidly growing religion in Belarus.

It is noteworthy that the number of atheists and non-believers (being, in fact, the same) hasn't dropped. So, that is double reduction of those who didn't identify themselves with any religion which ensured the growth within other groups, as well as the choice of the simply Christians made in favor of this or that branch of Christianity.

It is no secret that the present Belarus authorities are known to have close relations with the Orthodox Church. In fact, they often emphasize the point. President A. Lukashenko publicly called himself an "Orthodox atheist". Therefore, the changes and amendments to the "Law on the freedom of religion and religious organizations" adopted by the House of Representatives are said to be the attempts to legalize the superiority of the dominating religions.

Table 20

Dynamics of distribution of answers to the question "What is you religion?", % (open question)		
Variant of answer	04'01	09'02
Orthodox	58.9	67.4
Catholic	9.8	13.1
Christian	11.8	7.4
Atheist	5.1	4.9
Non-believer	0.6	1.0
Protestant	0.3	0.6
Jew	—	0.1
Moslem	—	0.1
NA	13.4	5.6

Table 21

Distribution of answers to the question "The Chamber of Representatives has recently adopted the new edition of the law approving "the leading role of the Orthodox Church" in our country. Some people support it believing this is fair because the majority of Belarusian believers are Orthodox believers. Others speak out against it saying the law infringes upon the rights of other religions. What do you think about it?, %

Variant of answer	%
I think that the Orthodox Church shall be superior to other religions in Belarus	33.6
I think all churches shall enjoy equal rights in our country	57.7

These attempts are often oppositely interpreted. Thus, prominent Russian human rights activists L. Ponomarev and G. Yakunin in an open address to the members of the National Assembly pointed out that the given draft law "considerably restricts the freedom of religion for all the believers and puts religious life under the humiliating state control". Furthermore, L. Ponomarev and G. Yakunin note that "despite the principles of a law-abiding state the new draft law empowers local departments of justice to indefinitely suspend activity of religious organizations without court decision". According to the authors of the letter, "the draft law severely restricts possibility for a believer to spread his beliefs, i.e. even officially registered religious communities are not allowed to have their publications. Before being distributed, all religious literature should undergo a religious expertise, which in fact means the introduction of state church censorship in Belarus".

On the other hand, the Patriarchal Exarch of Belarus, Metropolitan of Minsk and Filaret of Slutsk spoke out in favor of the draft law. In his opinion, the existing law "On the freedom of religion and religious organizations" adopted in 1992 does not respond to the real situation within society. Besides, it is inferior to the European legislation as far as preserving cultural and spiritual heritage of people is concerned. The Filaret noted that one of the sources of discontent on the part of young religious organizations formed 10–15 years ago is the preamble of the draft law stating the role of five traditional denominations in the history and culture of Belarus. The Metropolitan is confident that the new law "would not infringe upon the rights of believers but, on the contrary, ensure additional opportuni-

ties to the citizens to confess their faith". He also pinpoints that "in general all traditional religions positively regard the draft law and have all approved it".

Table 22

Attitude to parity of denominations depending on religion*, %

Variant of answer	Attitude towards the amendments to the law on religion, approving the leading role of the Orthodox Church in Belarus		
	The Orthodox Church shall be superior to other religions	All churches shall enjoy equal rights	DA/NA
Orthodox	41.4	51.7	6.9
Catholic	8.6	84.3	7.1
Christian	33.3	59.5	7.2
Atheist	8.2	63.0	28.8
Non-believer	14.3	50.0	35.7
Protestant	11.1	88.9	—
Jew	—	100.0	—
Moslem	—	100.0	—
DA	26.2	58.3	15.5

**To be read horizontally, for example, 84.3% of Catholics believe that all the churches shall enjoy equal rights*

Now, what do people, 90% of which are the followers of this or that denomination think of the issue?

As we see from Table 21, about 60% of the respondents stand for the parity of all churches. Only a third of the respondents supported the idea of superiority for the Orthodox Church, despite the fact that two thirds of the Belarusians identify themselves as Orthodox believers. That is a manifestation of public wisdom and tolerance of the Belarusian people as well as aversion to discrimination and disparity as far as relations between different denominations are concerned.

As one can see, apart from the vast majority of Catholics and Protestants, the overwhelming majority of atheists and Orthodox believers are of the same opinion (See Table 22). Obviously, the figures need to be thoroughly studied in the Council of the Republic so that while considering the draft law its members take into account not only the arguments of the interested parties but also the opinion of Belarusian citizens.

Shall Belarusians count on improvement of life?

Regardless of an active propaganda in state-run mass media of economic achievements of the authorities, the population is still mainly concerned about social-economic problems. The most significant among them are: price rise and impoverishment of the population (71.9% and 60.6% of the answers, respectively). There is also an increased concern about unemployment (49.4%), what is an evident of its latent growth.

Table 23

Change of the economic situation in Belarus over the last year, %

Variant of answer	04'00	10'00	08'01	10'01	04'02	09'02
Has deteriorated	64.8	57.5	35.9	29.2	55.5	50.0
Has remained unchanged	27.9	33.8	40.7	47.4	33.2	37.8
Has improved	7.0	7.5	16.9	17.8	7.7	5.9

Table 24

Dynamics of distribution of answers to the question "Please, state average income (including wages, pensions and other incomes) for one family members last month:", %

Variant of answer	08'01	10'01	04'02	09'02
Below living wage budget	50.5	44.9	49.9	49.5
From living wage budget to minimum living wage	32.4	34.7	31.1	32.7
From living wage budget to \$100	11.9	14.0	14.8	12.2
More than \$100	4.6	5.8	4.2	5.6

Table 23 clearly shows that there is a decrease in number of those who believe the economic situation in the country has improved. During the last two and a half years the dynamics of such answers proves the fact that the public sense of certain economic improvement, which took place in 2001, is closely related to the authorities' efforts to intensify social expenses of legal entities during the presidential election, rather than to a recovery of the national economy. After the 2001 election the economy, as many expected, returned to its usual condition, and the survey results reflect the tendency.

Today only every seventh (13.8%) believes that during A. Lukashenko's ruling his life and life of his family has improved. Every second (48.5%) thinks in the opposite. That is a further proof of an unfavorable economic situation in the country.

As we see from Table 24, the structure of the population by the level of incomes per capita has not changed recently (excluding the presidential campaign). Almost half of Belarusians (49.5%) live below the poverty line (the minimum wage budget), another third (32.7%) has incomes below the level of simple reproduction (the minimum living wage). In other words, 82.2% of our fellow citizens could hardly make ends meet.

Aside from low incomes, the population is concerned about backpays in wages and pensions. During the last year two thirds of the respondents (67.4%) have faced such problem, and 55.4% – have faced it repeatedly.

Table 25

Distribution of answers to the question "How would you assess the work of Belarus' authorities on a 5-grade scale?", %

Institution	Grade					On average
	1	2	3	4	5	
President	17.6	20.5	30.7	21.1	8.3	2.82
Government	18.1	27.5	37.2	12.9	2.6	2.54
Parliament	20.3	28.7	35.5	11.5	2.2	2.46
Local authorities	24.0	25.1	31.4	14.8	2.7	2.46

If the above data proves there are serious grounds to be concerned about the social-economic situation in the country, the survey materials demonstrate that the population lacks optimism regarding an improvement of the situation in the future. Two thirds of the respondents (66.3%) predict the economic situation to deteriorate or to remain unchanged. Only every sixth respondent sounds optimistic in this respect (16.9%).

Every second respondent (49.1%) is confident the state of affairs in our country develops in a wrong direction. Right after the election 38.1% of the respondents gave a similar answer. As of today, only 21.3% of voters believe the country develops in the right direction.

Only every fourth (24.4%) expects the authorities to improve the situation, and every fifth (20%) – expects stability. Almost one-third (30.7%) expects nothing from Belarus' authorities, they rely only on themselves. As for other public interests, an insignificant number of the respondents expects the authorities to realize them. The data proves the population does not believe the authorities are able to solve the pressing problems of public life.

To certain degree 57.2% of the respondents are not satisfied with A. Lukashenko's ruling. Only 39.1% think in the opposite.

The activity of all branches and levels of state authorities is assessed very low by the population (See Table 25). As one could see, on average none of the presented institutions enjoys a satisfactory grade. Probably for that reason the number of those who trust any state institutions (excluding the army) is much smaller than the number of those who have no trust at all.

Thus, it seems there is no point for Belarusians in setting hopes and expecting our authorities to improve the economic situation in the country.

Chances of alternative

"Who could oppose A. Lukashenko today? Who needs cosmic rating to be invented?" – Rakhat Lu-

kumov asks sarcastically in the editor's column of Sovetskaya Belorussia ("respectable newspaper for respectable people"), ardently "denouncing" the results of latest studies by "independent sociologists". But why should someone oppose the president if "A. Lukashenko remains the acknowledged leader and if there were an election today – the result would have been the same as last year!" Naturally, why? The country prospers, wages and pensions rise, investments come in, birth rate increases, and numerous international organizations repeatedly invite Belarus to join them... There is no need to be a sociologist or psychologist to imagine the expression of anyone who reads these lines – from the president himself and Mr. Lukumov to common citizens. The majority of Belarusians knows (or at least feels) the truth – for that purpose "respectable people" have only to get off their BMW or Mercedes and take a city bus or trolley-bus in any settlement and in any direction. But we shall not turn to the common level of the discussion, let's better consider the findings of the latest public opinion poll.

How many people in Belarus read independent press, which publishes results of opinion polls conducted by non-state research centers? We will not argue about figures – clearly, much less than state-run press. Undoubtedly, neither the "respectable newspaper" nor the Belarusian television reports the falling president's rating. This is how Belarusians reacted to a simple question regarding A. Lukashenko's rating (See Table 26).

Table 26

Distribution of answers to the question "Do you think A. Lukashenko's rating (i.e. people's readiness to vote for him at the next election) has increased or decreased since the 2001 presidential election?"

Variant of answer	%
Has decreased	59.8
Has increased	17.2
DA/NA	23.0

Table 27

Distribution of answers to the question "Do you know a candidate who could successfully compete with A. Lukashenko at the next presidential election?"

Variant of answer	%
Yes, I know	15.8
No, I do not know	82.1

Table 28

Comparative analysis of electoral preferences of different groups of voters, %

If the following politicians were candidates at the next presidential election, could vote for:	All respondents (100)	Convinced A. Lukashenko's opponents (41.7)	Know an alternative to A. Lukashenko (15.8)
A. Lukashenko	17.8	0	3.4
Candidate, chosen successor of A. Lukashenko	7.1	0	3.4
V. Vecherko (BPF Adradzhenne)	*	3.6	5.5
S. Gaidukevich (LDPB)	7.7	13.6	25.4
S. Kalyakin (BCP)	*	*	3.0
A. Lebedko (UCP)	*	5.1	6.4
M. Marinich (Delovaya Initsiativa)	*	4.5	5.5
Z. Poznyak (CCP of BPF)	*	4.7	8.9
V. Polevikova (Nadzeya)**	3.5	6.8	3.4
Another candidate	5.4	7.2	10.6
Do not know yet, will judge by circumstances	40.5	44.4	16.9

* The ratings of these politicians is below the margin of error (3%)

** The questionnaire was worked out before the USDP congress

For each person who is confident that the president's rating increased, there are four those who believe it fell. And there are twofold more regular readers of Sovetskaya Belorussia than of Narod-

naya Volya in the latter group! As the saying goes, murder will out.

Table 29

Comparative analysis of the electorate knowing the candidate who could successfully compete with A. Lukashenko at the presidential election, and those who do not know such candidate, %

Social characteristics	Know	Do not know
Estimation of the economic situation in Belarus over the last year:		
· has improved	4.7	6.1
· has remained unchanged	29.4	39.3
· has deteriorated	60.1	48.7
Would wish their children do private business:		
· yes	70.2	48.7
· no	15.3	30.7
Satisfied with A. Lukashenko's ruling:		
· rather/partially satisfied	15.3	43.8
· rather/partially dissatisfied	82.1	52.9
Our country develops:		
· in the right direction	9.7	23.5
· in a wrong direction	68.7	46.0
Would like emigrate:		
· yes	51.4	35.6
· would not like moving anywhere	39.8	57.9
Estimation of law observance in the country:		
· all are equal before the law and a perpetrator shall account for any crime	7.7	16.9
· those who hold high posts could escape punishment	45.2	32.1
Estimation of change of authorities during A. Lukashenko's rule:		
· power and arbitrariness of authorities have increased	64.2	39.2
· power and arbitrariness of authorities have decreased	21.0	35.8
Believe that after the 2001 presidential election A. Lukashenko's rating:		
· has increased	7.2	19.1
· has decreased	80.4	56.5
At a possible referendum on changing the Constitution to make A. Lukashenko eligible for the third consecutive term would vote:		
· for such changes	4.2	17.9
· against such changes	77.9	46.2
At the election to local Council in spring 2003 would prefer to vote for:		
· candidate-supporters of A. Lukashenko	6.2	32.1
· candidate-opponent of A. Lukashenko	57.1	26.1
· another candidate	24.1	14.7
Support the integration of Belarus and Russia:		
· on the principles of the European Union	65.6	45.7
· by means of Belarus becoming part of Russia	17.8	22.9
At a possible referendum on the question suggested by V. Putin in August (the unification of Belarus and Russia on three principles):		
· would say they agree	23.0	34.4
· would say they disagree	41.7	23.7
· will judge by circumstances	26.8	32.7
Believe that Belarus shall uphold the same course for rapprochement with the West as Russia does:		
· yes	70.5	56.8
· no	11.7	14.4
Confidence in non-state mass media:		
· trust	50.2	29.3
· distrust	35.9	41.6
Confidence in non-state research centers:		
· trust	52.4	35.0
· distrust	23.0	25.8
Attitude towards the recent court trials of non-state newspapers:		
· consider fair	7.3	18.0
· consider unfair	66.6	35.7
Attitude towards introduction of state control over study and formation of public opinion:		
· support	12.8	19.4
· do not support	74.6	54.7

But Mr. Lukumov's question is not an idle one. Until it remains unanswered, Belarus will plunge

deeper into the past, and its citizens will more often think about emigration (as of today, about 40% of Belarusians would like to move to another country). Do Belarusians have chances of an alternative? We'll try to answer this question (See Table 27).

As we see, the majority of our fellow citizens (five against one) see no alternative to the president, although they begin thinking about it. However, a correlation analysis of the answers to this question revealed a striking fact: 3fold more people among those who believe that A. Lukashenko's rating dropped after the 2001 presidential election know an alternative candidate than among those who say it went up. That means that the first condition for the appearance of an alternative – awareness of the majority of the population of the president's real rating – is met.

Let's see if such an alternative can appear in the circle of political opposition (See Table 28).

At first sight, the picture is not very comforting: only two opposition politicians enjoy rating exceeding the margin of error, and more than 40% of the respondents cannot make their choice. We have witnessed a similar picture for many years already. But there are new important circumstances. First, A. Lukashenko's rating (together with his possible successor) levels at 25% (open rating, as we have recently reported, is 27% today), what is 20% less than during his first term of presidency. Second, if among A. Lukashenko's convinced opponents and the electorate as a whole the number of those who are ready to vote for an alternative candidate is almost equal to the number of those who have not made their choice yet, then among those who know such a candidate there are 4fold more voters who are determined with the alternative candidate than those undecided yet. That means the knowledge of such an alternative is the most important factor for choosing an alternative candidate. In other words, the candidate's personal features, his political program, team, etc., are secondary factors under such conditions. The main thing is that the candidate appears not only on political arena, but in public consciousness. Another important proof of this statement: 15% of those who know about the alternative candidate are people who a year ago ... voted for A. Lukashenko! Having known the alternative, they are ready to reject the former idol. Knowledge is power! That is the second condition of a real alternative, which, unlike the first one, has not been met yet.

But how such knowledge could be achieved? A comparative analysis of these electoral groups on social-demographic profile revealed almost no critical differences between them (which could explain knowledge or absence of knowledge about A. Lukashenko's possible competitor). Expectedly, among those who know such a candidate, there are more men, people with higher level of education, youth, students, people working in the private sector, residents of the capital having higher incomes. And on the contrary, among those who do not know such a candidate, there are more women, people with lower level of education, aged people, pensioners, residents of towns and villages having lower incomes.

People's moods, their vision of the most important problems of social-economic and public-political development of the country play a great role in their desire to know more about a possible alternative (See Table 29).

The difference between these groups is obvious: those who know the alternative candidate are dominated by supporters of democracy, market economy, law-abiding state and Belarus' independence. But there are no mirror-like distributions, with minor exceptions, among these electoral groups. That means unlike other "dividing lines" of Belarus' electorate (on its attitude towards the president and his course, the integration with Russia, etc.), the groups of "knowledge – lack of knowledge of an alternative to A. Lukashenko" are not antagonistic. In turn, that means such division could be overcome: if people know the president's real rating and an alternative candidate, a considerable part of the second group may join the first group and form the majority of the electorate. The last table reveals the most important mechanisms to meet the second condition – non-state research centers studying public opinion and non-state press publishing findings of this study (we shall also note that in conditions of the Belarusian information space Russia's research centers and TV channels could play the same and even a bigger role).

As we see today there is no one to "invent a cosmic rating for" – neither the opposition leaders, nor the president. Unlike Rakhat Lukumov and his colleagues stuffing "respectable people" with tales about the "firmness of the acknowledged leader" (probably such "throwing dust in people's eyes" is their latent Fronde?), on the basis of the received data we state that if the above conditions are met Belarus could have a chance of a real alternative. Who and how will use these chances – the opposition, the president or his entourage (by means of launching true reforms), a "third" or

maybe "outside force" – remains as open question. But the one who skillfully takes advantages of them will become the winner.

Slogan of the day – rely on yourself. The majority of Belarusians does not believe in positive changes and relies on themselves

Social optimism is the indicator determining the current condition of the society. Obviously, sooner or later Belarus will have to face painful economic reforms, which should be carried out with knowledge of the population's possible reaction at the situation when the ability of each person to help himself is key to success. The necessity to keep the present social-economic order President A. Lukashenko explains by reluctance to carry out reforms and "break Belarusians" who are accustomed to care from the side of the state. He called the Belarusian economic model his "major achievement", and at the latest press conference he stated that the policy of the present authorities would remain unchanged because it enjoys support of the majority of the population. But the population, as we could see (See Table 5 on Page 35), has a different vision of the situation.

Since the 2001 presidential election the number of the respondents who believe that Belarus develops in a wrong direction – we shall call them pessimists – has been twofold bigger than the number of optimists – those who think in the opposite.

Table 30

Distribution of answers to the question "Are you satisfied with A. Lukashenko's ruling ", %

Variant of answer	All respondents	A. Lukashenko's supporters	A. Lukashenko's opponents
Rather satisfied	12.9	57.9	0.4
Partially satisfied	26.2	36.1	5.5
Partially dissatisfied	20.7	4.5	21.5
Rather dissatisfied	36.5	0.9	70.5

And the direction of the country's development, as we know, is to a great extent determined by activity of the head of state. At present estimation of his professional activity is that (See Table 30) the president's success, recognition of his managerial merits is out of the question – to some extent about 60% of the respondents are dissatisfied with A. Lukashenko's ruling. We have already accustomed to the mirror picture of answers of the president's supporters and opponents in such case. As well as to the fact that Belarus' youth as a whole, not taking into account its political views, is negative about the present leader – 20.6% of the respondents aged 18–29 partially dissatisfied, 53.4% – rather dissatisfied with A. Lukashenko's ruling.

Dissatisfaction with the present causes scepticism with respect to the future (See Table 31). One-third of the respondents expects the social-economic situation to deteriorate in the future, whereas only twofold less Belarusians still cherish hopes for improvement. A. Lukashenko's supporters and opponents demonstrate the diametrical opposition of their views. The young generation, what is quite expressive, is inclined to share the point of view of the latter group – 41% of the respondents aged 18–29 have no doubts the social-economic situation will deteriorate, and only 10.2% hope for the better.

Table 31

Distribution of answers to the question "How would the economic situation in Belarus change in the years to come?", %

Variant of answer	All respondents	A. Lukashenko's supporters	A. Lukashenko's opponents
Would improve	16.9	50.0	2.6
Would remain unchanged	31.6	20.6	31.1
Would deteriorate	34.7	5.8	57.3

The reasons for such a skeptical vision of the future of Belarusians could be explained with the

data of Table 32. It turns out that Belarusians do not expect authorities to start economic reforms, rapprochement with Russia or the West, mostly they rely on themselves (30.7%). On the one hand, that is not bad – people with such liberal motto (help yourself!) are hard to be manipulated, they form the social basis for changes and are ready to stand inevitable hardships. On the other hand, with the dominating paternalist model of state these figures prove it failed.

Naturally, A. Lukashenko's supporters, who are to a great extent recipients of state aid and social outsiders, are quite satisfied with such policy, and they expect the authorities, first of all, to ensure stability (34.7%). Whereas A. Lukashenko's opponents – the most dynamic and educated part of the society, rejecting the present stability (for many it is a synonym of the absence of possibilities for self-realization) and doubting economic reforms – count on themselves more than the rest of Belarusians.

Table 32

Distribution of answers to the question "What do you expect from the present authorities?", %

Variant of answer	All respondents	A. Lukashenko's supporters	A. Lukashenko's opponents
I expect nothing from the authorities, I rely only on myself	30.7	15.1	43.0
I expect an improvement of the economic situation	24.4	27.9	15.9
I expect stability	20.0	34.7	12.1
The integration with Russia	10.5	12.5	12.5
Economic reforms	7.3	4.6	8.4
Rapprochement with the West	3.2	0.5	4.9

But if we have to live in line with this principle, it would be better to do it where there are more favorable conditions for success of active and dynamic people. A considerable part of the youth is prone to draw such conclusion: 38.3% of all the respondents want to move abroad, among those aged 18–29 – the figure is 63.4%.

Table 33

Distribution of answers to the question "Are you personally ready to openly express your political views?"

Variant of answer	%
I have never been afraid of openly expressing my political views	43.8
Sometimes I am afraid of expressing my political views	36.3
Often I am afraid of openly expressing my political views	17.8

But how dissatisfaction with the current situation in the country, its present leader, and also doubt of positive changes and absence of illusions influence Belarusians' political mood? As we see from Table 33, regardless of the state propaganda and the repressive machine, more than 40% of the respondents are never afraid of expressing their political views.

In fact, when earlier we asked the question "Do you think people are ready to openly express their political views?", the picture was more pessimistic – about 70% of the respondents were confident that to a different extent Belarusians are afraid of expressing their views. When we asked the question to the respondents, we saw more courage. It turns out that people think better of themselves than of others.

And those who stand up for their interests publicly enjoy today a favorable attitude – more than two thirds of the respondents consider actions of small entrepreneurs (who recently carried out a 100,000-strong strike against increasing taxes and other limitations on their activity from the side of the state) reasonable (unreasonable – only one fifth).

Will labor unions become the support of authorities?

As we know, during the 2001 presidential election a part of labor unions elite, previously loyal to A. Lukashenko, tried to play against him. Although the attempt failed, that was enough for the authorities to understand the potential force of the largest public organization of the country and how efficient a skillful application of such potential could be.

Shortly after the election the authorities launched a directed policy with regard to the Belarusian Federation of Labor Unions to put it under total control. The introduction of a new procedure to collect labor-union dues, the replacement of V. Goncharik with F. Vitko under the pressure of authorities and then the latter with L. Kozik, the dismissal of A. Starikevich, the editor of *Belarusky Chas* periodical, the dismissal of A. Yaroshuk, the leader of agricultural labor unions – are the most expressive stages of that policy.

Today we could state that the ultimate goal has almost been achieved. The BFLU is no longer a headache for the authorities, and the restoration of the old procedure of collecting dues through accounts departments is a proof of it. Earlier the Constitutional Court found its abolition legal.

We shall admit that the "sweeping up" in the BFLU ranks caused no wide resonance among labor union masses. International organizations protested threatening with sanctions for violating the procedure of personnel changes, opposition politicians expressed solidarity, independent press provided a detailed coverage of what was going on. But labor union "masses" remained silent.

Table 34

Dynamics of trust to labor unions, %

Variant of answer	10'98	11'99	10'00	10'01	10'02
Labor unions of the BFLU					
– trust	14.9	17.8	18.6	22.2	21.0
– distrust	29.2	33.0	32.3	36.7	39.4
Independent and free labor unions					
– trust	14.5	19.8	18.9	25.5	27.5
– distrust	27.1	28.5	27.4	36.2	34.0

What is the reason for such a passive attitude? In fact, on the example of the BFLU the authorities worked through a scenario of taking non-state structures under control if their activity do not suit them. Obviously, after the given precedent such scenario could successfully be used against any other organization.

Last February ISEPS predicted a possible split of the BFLU, a part of which could turn into free labor unions, the rest – "yellow" labor unions. Today the reality is a bit different: the entire BFLU is put under control, although we shall not exclude an exodus of industrial labor unions, the leadership of which does not want to be an instrument of promoting policy of state authorities. So far the BFLU has failed to become a real factor of public-political life. The gap between the democratic leaders of the BFLU and the apathy of labor union masses, and dependence of grass root organizations on the administration proved too big.

The fact that the BFLU "sweeping up" was quite calm could probably be explained by a low public respect for labor unions. Only 21% of the respondents say they trust the BFLU structures, whereas almost twofold more people distrust them. At the same time, 27.5% of the respondents trust free and independent labor unions, and 34.0% distrust them.

In the background of other state and public institutions labor unions look not so bad, leaving behind the government, political parties, KGB, the Central Election Commission and the National Assembly. Independent labor unions are placed higher if we have a look at the dynamics of the level of trust over the last 5 years (See Table 34). The number of those who trust them has jumped almost twofold (of those who distrust – only by 7%).

The figures of the BFLU are more modest. But it could hardly count on a better place. Over the ten years of Belarus' independence the BFLU labor unions have failed to adjust to the changes that take place. They are no longer driving belts of the USSR Communist Party, since the latter ceased its existence, but they have not become true advocates of workers' interests. And they have to pay for it.

Considering the attitude of these two groups (those who trust free labor unions and labor unions

of the BFLU), it turns out that less than two thirds (61.2%) of the former group simultaneously trust labor union of the BFLU, whereas 80% of the latter group trust free and independent labor unions. That is a further proof of the fact that free and independent labor unions enjoy a wider authority with those who are not dissatisfied with labor unions.

In fact, A. Lukashenko's supporters see labor unions in a more positive light than his opponents, both the BFLU and free labor unions: 30.9% of the president's supporters say they trust labor unions of the BFLU, and 26.4% — free labor unions (distrust — 31.1% and 25.0%, respectively). A. Lukashenko's opponents are more skeptical — only 14.6% of them trust the BFLU labor unions (4fold more of them distrust labor unions) and 30.6% trust free and independent labor unions (42.6% distrust them).

Of course, Belarusians have their own vision of the latest events within the BFLU and the place and role of labor unions in our life. The replacement of F. Vitko with L. Kozik was carried out without ceremony and simply could not win the sympathy of the population. A little more than one fourth of the respondents accept the replacement and consider labor unions' support of the presidential policy necessary. At the same time half of the respondents believe labor unions shall not support the policy of the president if it does not correspond to workers' interests (See Table 35).

Table 35

Distribution of answers to the question "Recently F. Vitko, head of the Federation of Labor Unions, who criticized the current social-economic course, has been replaced with L. Kozik, deputy head of the Presidential Administration, who, as many believe, would ensure labor unions' support to A. Lukashenko's policy. Some people agree with this replacement, others disagree. What do you think about it?", %

Variant of answer	All respondents	A. Lukashenko's supporters	A. Lukashenko's opponents
I agree: labor unions shall support the policy of the president, if it corresponds to workers' interests	26.5	69.2	7.9
I disagree: labor unions shall not support the policy of the president, if it does not corresponds to workers' interests	50.9	8.3	76.9
DA/NA	22.6	22.5	15.2

The respondents having different attitude towards the latest reshuffling in the BFLU live in similar conditions (both groups face backpays equally), but their political and economic views are absolutely different. So, for example, the majority of the respondents who think labor unions shall support the policy of the president rather (30.7%) or partially (41.4%) satisfied with A. Lukashenko's ruling. Their opponents see his activity in a different light: 2.2% and 16.4%, respectively. Being satisfied with the present (almost half is confident the country develops in the right direction), the first group is optimistic about the future (41.9% say the economic situation in the country will improve, 4fold less respondents say it will deteriorate). They link the future to the name of the present head of state (at the presidential election 84.3% voted for A. Lukashenko, 59.1% are ready to support him again, and 43.6% support the abolition of the Constitutional norm of two presidential terms).

On the contrary, the second group emphasizes that the country develops in a wrong direction (72.2%), prospects for an improvement of the economic situation seem rather vague (4.9% — it will improve, 50.9% — it will deteriorate). At the presidential election they voted more actively for V. Goncharik (33.9%) than for A. Lukashenko (25.4%), they are negative about the Constitutional norm of two presidential terms (78.3%) and are less ready (8.2%) to support him at a new presidential election (compare: S. Gaidukevich received 10.6%).

Summing it up we shall note that although the authorities managed to take the BFLU under control, its present condition, authority with the society, efficiency, etc., raise serious doubts about its usage as an effective instrument of promoting interests of the authorities.

Will private business help Belarusians?

What Belarusians are guided by in their uncomfortable life? Why the overwhelming majority keeps

silent about the absence of progress in the sphere of economy and living standards? We shall run the risks of assuming that fear is the most significant factor determining such behavior of the majority of Belarusians. A too big part of public life is under the state, it regulates public relations too rigidly, it thrusts its leading and guiding role too actively. It resulted in a low independence of the majority while solving their life problems, concern about their future and humble expectation of manna from authorities (See Table 36). As we could see, less than one third of the respondents (30.3%) is optimistic about job problems, whereas 45.3% are pessimistic in this respect and have to hold to it.

Supposedly, many "optimists" set hopes upon private business. Although the situation in the private business is rather complex, it continues to develop attracting new supporters. The data of Table 11 on Page 36 proves it to some degree. As one could see, over the last three years the number of those who wish their children to do private business has jumped almost 1.5fold.

Tables 37 and 38 are an indirect proof of a certain development of the private business. Almost the entire population actively uses services of private trading outlets (See Table 37). Only 7.5% of the respondents say they never do it. Almost one third of citizens (30.7%) earns living using their own property or means of production (See Table 38).

Table 36

Distribution of answers to the question "Which of the below statements corresponds to your position?"

Variant of answer	%
If for some reasons I lose my main job, it will undermine my welfare and the welfare of my family. It will be very difficult to find other sources of income	45.3
If for some reasons I lose my main job, most likely I will find other ways to earn living and provide for my family	30.3

Table 37

Distribution of answers to the question "Numerous private trading outlets have appeared over the recent years – from large clothing and automobile markets to small kiosks. How often do you use their services?"

Variant of answer	%
Several times a week	41.5
Several times a month	36.8
Several times a year	13.6
I never use their services	7.5

Table 38

Distribution of answers to the question "Do you possess immovables or means of production (land plot, vehicle, tractor, trading equipment, other machinery) which you use to earn money?"

Variant of answer	%
Yes	30.7
No	68.5

Not surprisingly, two thirds of the respondents (67.4%) consider reasonable the protest of small entrepreneurs against attempts to limit their activity, which resulted in a large nationwide strike. Only 11.9% of the respondents think in the opposite.

Thus, the development of economic relations gradually involves more Belarusians to support private enterprise. That gives some hopes for the future.

To the issue of land

As we know, after a long struggle against the left Russia's Duma approved the new land code, which envisions turnover of agricultural land. This big victory was actively debated in Russian mass media,

especially electronic mass media, and it could not slip by unnoticed for Belarusians. Considerable changes in land relations have taken place in the Ukraine. Probably, as a result, our country sees a liberalization of public opinion on the issue of land relations. In particular, Table 39 shows that there are 28.6% of opponents of land turnover in Belarus, whereas five years ago the figure was 36.6%.

There is certain progress regarding the possibility for foreigners to own land in Belarus (See Table 40). Although 66.1% of the respondent still oppose it, nonetheless, the tendency of the last five years is obvious. The authorities, however, continue to impede the process saying "our people are not ready for it".

Table 39

Dynamics of distribution of answers to the question "Is trade turnover of land possible in Belarus?", %

Variant of answer	06'97	09'02
Possible without limitations	7.4	8.1
Possible with certain limitations	45.5	52.5
Impossible at all	36.6	28.6

Table 40

Dynamics of distribution of answers to the question "Is it possible for foreigners to be able to own land in Belarus?", %

Variant of answer	06'97	09'02
Yes	13.0	20.4
No	75.4	66.1

The population's estimation of another Belarusian phenomenon is of great interest – here we mean emergency measures and public intercom meetings at harvest time, these rudiments of socialism, the brightest political show of each summer. Today more than 44% of the respondents view it positively, because otherwise, in their opinion, the country would starve. However, the same number of respondents say these measures is a feeble semblance of the authorities' care about the people.

Results of the nation opinion poll, conducted by IISEPS in September of 2002, %

1. Distribution of answers to the question: "Estimate the work of the Belarus president on a 5-grade scale " (1 mark– "poor", 5 marks – "excellent")

Table 1.1. Depending on age

Variant of answer	All respondents	Age, years old						
		18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+up
1 mark	17.6	22.8	27.2	29.8	20.6	16.5	13.3	9.4
2 marks	20.5	28.3	31.5	28.3	26.4	23.6	14.7	7.9
3 marks	30.7	35.2	26.1	31.4	31.1	34.8	36.0	21.9
4 marks	21.1	12.2	9.1	7.4	14.2	18.1	28.8	35.7
5 marks	8.3	1.5	4.1	1.6	5.8	3.7	7.2	22.7
DA/NA	1.8	0	2.0	1.5	1.9	3.3	0	2.4

Table 1.2. Depending on education

Variant of answer	Education				
	Elementary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Secondary vocational	Higher (incomplete higher)
1 mark	9.4	10.8	18.7	19.1	25.8
2 marks	6.6	15.6	23.0	24.9	23.3
3 marks	18.5	26.3	34.5	32.8	32.2
4 marks	35.7	30.1	18.0	18.0	13.2
5 marks	25.5	16.5	4.6	3.4	3.4
DA/NA	4.3	0.7	1.2	1.8	2.1

Table 1.3. Depending on status

Variant of answer	Status				
	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector	Students	Pensioners	Unemployed, housewives
1 mark	29.5	18.1	26.1	9.4	16.8
2 marks	25.6	24.1	27.7	9.2	26.7
3 marks	33.2	34.5	35.3	21.6	33.3
4 marks	8.6	18.0	7.4	36.5	14.4
5 marks	2.8	3.1	2.4	21.3	6.1
DA/NA	0.3	2.2	1.3	2.0	2.7

Table 1.4. Depending on place of living

Variant of answer	Area						
	Minsk	Minsk region	Brest and region	Grodno and region	Vitebsk and region	Mogilev and region	Gomel and region
1 mark	29.5	13.9	10.0	21.1	21.8	11.9	13.8
2 marks	21.8	12.8	20.1	24.4	25.0	17.1	22.6
3 marks	24.5	26.7	38.2	34.7	27.4	29.7	34.8
4 marks	13.0	25.6	24.8	17.7	18.5	30.0	19.9
5 marks	9.2	13.5	6.6	2.1	6.7	10.8	8.3
DA/NA	2.0	7.5	0.3	0	0.6	0.5	0.6

Table 1.5. Depending on type of settlement

Variant of answer	Type of settlement				
	Capital	Regional centers	Cities	Towns	Village
1 mark	29.5	12.2	11.7	16.3	18.0
2 marks	21.8	25.6	24.9	14.6	18.4
3 marks	24.5	37.4	29.1	33.0	29.4
4 marks	13.0	18.8	24.9	20.2	25.5
5 marks	9.2	5.8	3.8	15.6	6.8
DA/NA	2.0	0.2	5.6	0.3	1.9

2. Distribution of answers to the question: "Do you think A. Lukashenko's rating (i.e. people's readiness to vote for him at the next election) has increased or decreased since the 2001 presidential election?"

Table 2.1. Depending on age

Variant of answer	All respondents	Age, years old						
		18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+up
Has increased	17.2	11.7	7.8	3.9	8.6	14.3	18.4	34.9
Has decreased	59.8	66.9	75.0	74.0	70.9	65.2	57.9	35.7
DA/NA	23.0	21.4	17.2	22.1	20.5	20.5	23.7	29.4

Table 2.2. Depending on education

Variant of answer	Education				
	Elementary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Secondary vocational	Higher (incomplete higher)
Has increased	29.6	31.2	12.1	14.7	10.2
Has decreased	31.3	47.6	66.1	66.8	68.5
DA/NA	39.1	21.2	21.8	18.5	21.3

Table 2.3. Depending on status

Variant of answer	Status				
	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector	Students	Pensioners	Unemployed, housewives
Has increased	8.2	11.1	8.4	35.0	7.4
Has decreased	73.2	66.1	75.8	37.0	72.3
DA/NA	18.6	22.8	15.8	28.0	20.3

Table 2.4. Depending on place of living

Variant of answer	Area						
	Minsk	Minsk region	Brest and region	Grodno and region	Vitebsk and region	Mogilev and region	Gomel and region
Has increased	14.4	20.5	22.2	6.3	11.8	26.5	17.9
Has decreased	57.1	49.8	64.4	73.7	63.5	46.7	64.8
DA/NA	28.5	29.7	13.4	20.0	24.7	26.8	17.3

Table 2.5. Depending on type of settlement

Variant of answer	Type of settlement				
	Capital	Regional centers	Cities	Towns	Village
Has increased	14.4	16.4	17.3	16.7	19.4
Has decreased	57.1	71.9	48.2	61.4	58.7
DA/NA	28.5	11.7	34.5	21.9	21.9

3. Distribution of answers to the question: "If there were a referendum on changing the Constitution of Belarus to make A. Lukashenko eligible for the third term of presidency, how would you vote?"

Table 3.1. Depending on age

Variant of answer	All respondents	Age, years old						
		18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+up
Would vote for such changes	15.5	6.0	6.0	2.6	5.3	10.8	19.5	35.1
Would vote against such changes	50.6	60.1	69.6	67.7	61.6	57.6	44.2	24.8
Do not know yet	25.4	24.7	14.9	23.8	25.4	24.6	28.8	28.7
Would not take part in the referendum	7.2	9.2	9.0	4.5	6.6	5.9	6.6	9.1
NA	1.3	0	0.5	1.4	1.1	1.4	0.9	2.3

Table 3.2. Depending on education

Variant of answer	Education				
	Elementary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Secondary vocational	Higher (incomplete higher)
Would vote for such changes	30.3	30.7	11.1	10.6	7.3
Would vote against such changes	21.3	32.9	53.1	61.1	69.4
Do not know yet	33.2	28.1	27.3	21.5	17.3
Would not take part in the referendum	10.9	8.2	7.4	5.8	4.8
NA	4.3	0.1	1.1	1.0	1.2

Table 3.3. Depending on status

Variant of answer	Status				
	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector	Students	Pensioners	Unemployed, housewives
Would vote for such changes	4.9	9.3	4.3	34.6	7.9
Would vote against such changes	70.3	57.1	69.3	25.5	54.2
Do not know yet	17.5	26.4	18.5	29.0	26.3
Would not take part in the referendum	7.0	6.1	6.8	8.8	10.5
NA	0.3	1.1	1.0	2.1	1.1

Table 3.4. Depending on place of living

Variant of answer	Area						
	Minsk	Minsk region	Brest and region	Grodno and region	Vitebsk and region	Mogilev and region	Gomel and region
Would vote for such changes	17.0	7.4	13.5	10.9	13.5	25.5	21.3
Would vote against such changes	51.1	34.0	63.0	66.7	50.1	43.1	49.1
Do not know yet	22.9	43.3	17.8	18.9	29.6	22.9	20.3
Would not take part in the referendum	8.1	8.7	5.3	3.5	6.8	8.6	8.8
NA	0.9	6.6	0.4	0	0	0.1	0.5

Table 3.5. Depending on type of settlement

Variant of answer	Type of settlement				
	Capital	Regional centers	Cities	Towns	Village
Would vote for such changes	17.0	12.4	11.2	13.7	19.7
Would vote against such changes	51.1	58.8	43.4	52.8	47.7
Do not know yet	22.9	23.7	29.0	24.7	26.2
Would not take part in the referendum	8.1	5.1	10.8	8.6	5.4
NA	0.9	0	5.6	0.2	1.0

4. Distribution of answers to the question: "Do you know a candidate who could successfully compete with A. Lukashenko at the next presidential election?"

Table 4.1. Depending on age

Variant of answer	All respondents	Age, years old						
		18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+up
Yes, I know such candidate	15.8	26.1	18.7	22.3	21.4	18.4	14.3	4.9
No, I do not know such candidate	82.1	73.9	79.4	74.1	76.4	78.2	83.2	94.5
NA	2.1	0	1.9	3.6	2.2	3.4	2.5	0.6

Table 4.2. Depending on education

Variant of answer	Education				
	Elementary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Secondary vocational	Higher (incomplete higher)
Yes, I know such candidate	3.0	9.1	17.5	18.1	25.1
No, I do not know such candidate	97.0	88.8	80.4	79.8	71.2
NA	0	2.1	2.1	2.1	3.7

Table 4.3. Depending on status

Variant of answer	Status				
	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector	Students	Pensioners	Unemployed, housewives
Yes, I know such candidate	27.7	17.7	27.4	5.1	11.3
No, I do not know such candidate	71.1	79.1	71.5	94.1	86.4
NA	1.2	3.2	1.1	0.8	2.3

Table 4.4. Depending on place of living

Variant of answer	Area						
	Minsk	Minsk region	Brest and region	Grodno and region	Vitebsk and region	Mogilev and region	Gomel and region
Yes, I know such candidate	16.3	13.5	19.6	19.4	13.2	16.8	12.7
No, I do not know such candidate	82.0	78.5	79.1	79.6	86.8	82.2	86.5
NA	1.7	8.0	1.3	1.0	0	1.0	0.8

Table 4.5. Depending on type of settlement

Variant of answer	Type of settlement				
	Capital	Regional centers	Cities	Towns	Village
Yes, I know such candidate	16.3	13.5	19.6	19.4	13.2
No, I do not know such candidate	82.0	78.5	79.1	79.6	86.8
NA	1.7	8.0	1.3	1.0	0

5. Distribution of answers to the question: "V. Putin has recently harshly criticized the approaches of the Belarusian leadership to the integration of Belarus and Russia, and during the latest meeting with A. Lukashenko in the Kremlin he has offered to choose from two variants: to unite on the principles of the European Union (each state remains independent, and relies on itself), or Belarus shall become a part of the Russian Federation (and receive assistance on equal rights with other Russia's regions). Which of these variants do you support?"

Table 5.1. Depending on age

Variant of answer	All respondents	Age, years old						
		18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+up
Integration on EU principles	48.5	55.7	67.4	50.9	50.3	54.5	54.8	30.2
Becoming part of Russia	21.9	17.4	15.5	19.4	23.8	20.1	17.3	28.0
DA/NA	29.6	26.9	17.1	29.7	25.9	25.4	27.9	41.8

Table 5.2. Depending on education

Variant of answer	Education				
	Elementary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Secondary vocational	Higher (incomplete higher)
Integration on EU principles	24.0	36.0	40.8	54.5	64.4
Becoming part of Russia	21.3	33.1	38.6	20.6	14.7
DA/NA	54.7	30.9	20.6	24.9	20.9

Table 5.3. Depending on status

Variant of answer	Status				
	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector	Students	Pensioners	Unemployed, housewives
Integration on EU					

principles	61.6	51.9	69.7	31.4	51.7
Becoming part of Russia	18.7	20.6	13.7	27.4	21.1
DA/NA	19.7	27.5	16.6	41.2	27.2

Table 5.4. Depending on place of living

Variant of answer	Area						
	Minsk	Minsk region	Brest and region	Grodno and region	Vitebsk and region	Mogilev and region	Gomel and region
Integration on EU principles	55.3	35.1	59.5	57.4	35.1	49.7	48.7
Becoming part of Russia	14.8	7.2	27.2	21.1	37.8	31.9	17.9
DA/NA	29.9	57.7	13.3	21.5	27.1	18.4	33.4

Table 5.5. Depending on type of settlement

Variant of answer	Type of settlement				
	Capital	Regional centers	Cities	Towns	Village
Integration on EU principles	55.3	50.8	47.9	39.0	49.9
Becoming part of Russia	14.8	33.3	14.6	25.9	19.9
DA/NA	29.9	15.9	37.5	35.1	30.2

6. Distribution of answers to the question: "Russia's president suggested to hold in spring 2003 a referendum on the following question: "Do you agree with Russia and Belarus uniting into a single state on the following principles:

a/ ensuring parity of rights and freedoms of citizens of the united state;

b/ parity of the regions of the Russian Federation and Belarus as subjects of the common state;

c/ establishment of common governing bodies in line with the Russian Constitution?"

If there were such a referendum, how would you vote?"

Table 6.1. Depending on age

Variant of answer	All respondents	Age, years old						
		18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+up
I would say I agree	32.3	32.0	25.9	26.9	29.5	29.6	29.0	42.9
I would say I disagree	26.3	26.9	36.7	26.9	30.8	28.6	25.9	16.9
Do not know yet	31.7	31.5	27.5	37.3	32.0	30.0	35.2	30.8
Would not take part	8.0	9.6	8.7	6.7	5.7	8.9	8.1	6.4
NA	1.7	0	1.2	2.2	2.0	2.9	1.8	3.0

Table 6.2. Depending on education

Variant of answer	Education				
	Elementary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Secondary vocational	Higher (incomplete higher)
I would say I agree	38.5	43.0	29.0	31.7	26.3
I would say I disagree	15.4	20.0	28.7	28.9	31.2
Do not know yet	29.7	28.0	34.0	29.2	35.4
Would not take part	10.9	8.7	7.0	8.9	5.9
NA	5.5	0.3	1.3	1.3	1.2

Table 6.3. Depending on status

Variant of answer	Status				
	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector	Students	Pensioners	Unemployed, housewives
I would say I agree	29.8	1.5	27.1	42.2	22.5
I would say I disagree	30.8	28.9	38.3	16.6	37.6
Do not know yet	29.4	28.2	26.0	30.0	29.6
Would not take part	10.1	34.5	7.6	8.4	9.1

NA	0.4	6.9	1.0	2.8	1.2
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Table 6.4. Depending on place of living

Variant of answer	Area						
	Minsk	Minsk region	Brest and region	Grodno and region	Vitebsk and region	Mogilev and region	Gomel and region
I would say I agree	23.8	32.0	47.3	26.1	43.3	34.0	21.3
I would say I disagree	30.3	28.4	24.0	33.8	13.3	28.2	26.4
Do not know yet	32.8	23.0	20.9	36.2	34.6	33.7	42.3
Would not take part	12.4	6.8	7.8	3.9	8.8	4.1	10.0
NA	0.8	9.8	0	0	0	0	0

Table 6.5. Depending on type of settlement

Variant of answer	Type of settlement				
	Capital	Regional centers	Cities	Towns	Village
I would say I agree	23.8	36.4	19.2	38.7	36.7
I would say I disagree	30.2	28.5	26.4	26.9	22.4
Do not know yet	32.8	30.4	42.9	22.6	32.5
Would not take part	12.4	4.7	4.7	11.7	6.7
NA	0.8	0	6.8	0.1	1.7

7. Distribution of answers to the question: "If as a result of the referendum Belarus becomes a part of the Russian Federation, how most probably would you act?" (answers of those who chose options "agree" and "would not take part" to the previous question)

Table 7.1. Depending on age

Variant of answer	All respondents	Age, years old						
		18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+up
I would accept it	29.5	25.5	29.0	26.2	29.2	29.7	35.1	28.8
I would take part in protest actions	7.9	12.5	17.1	7.8	8.7	8.9	7.9	2.5
I would move to a different country	2.4	4.8	4.1	5.3	3.0	2.4	0.8	0.4
I would be ready to stand up for Belarus' independence with arms	2.1	1.4	2.7	0.9	3.2	2.8	2.2	0.8
DA	11.2	13.7	9.9	9.3	10.9	11.5	10.6	12.2

Table 7.2. Depending on education

Variant of answer	Education				
	Elementary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Secondary vocational	Higher (incomplete higher)
I would accept it	27.6	31.7	27.4	30.8	32.3
I would take part in protest actions	2.5	4.0	9.7	9.1	9.9
I would move to a different country	0	0.7	3.4	3.9	1.0
I would be ready to stand up for Belarus' independence with arms	0	2.2	2.4	2.8	1.6
DA	17.4	9.9	10.6	9.3	11.6

Table 7.3. Depending on status

Variant of answer	Status				
	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector	Students	Pensioners	Unemployed, housewives
I would accept it	25.2	30.8	25.6	28.7	36.9
I would take part in protest actions	9.5	9.3	17.5	2.9	8.6
I would move to a different country	4.6	2.3	5.2	0.2	5.4
I would be ready to stand up for Belarus' independence with arms	3.7	2.2	2.5	1.3	0.9
DA	12.0	10.1	12.1	13.6	3.9

Table 7.4. Depending on place of living

Variant of answer	Area						
	Minsk	Minsk region	Brest and region	Grodno and region	Vitebsk and region	Mogilev and region	Gomel and region
I would accept it	34.3	32.3	23.9	29.1	37.5	30.5	19.3
I would take part in protest actions	12.0	8.0	12.0	12.4	1.6	4.1	4.9
I would move to a different country	2.6	2.9	1.3	1.0	2.1	3.7	2.8
I would be ready to stand up for Belarus' independence with arms	3.2	3.7	0	1.3	0.4	1.1	4.1
DA	14.8	14.1	8.4	10.1	4.5	6.1	17.7

Table 7.5. Depending on type of settlement

Variant of answer	Type of settlement				
	Capital	Regional centers	Cities	Towns	Village
I would accept it	34.3	27.6	35.5	30.2	24.7
I would take part in protest actions	12.0	10.1	11.0	7.1	3.5
I would move to a different country	2.6	2.4	3.7	1.8	1.9
I would be ready to stand up for Belarus' independence with arms	3.2	3.2	3.0	0.3	1.5
DA	14.8	7.1	14.1	11.8	9.7

8. Distribution of answers to the question: "If there were an election to the Union Parliament, would you take part in it?"

Table 8.1. Depending on age

Variant of answer	All respondents	Age, years old						
		18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+up
Yes	60.9	58.9	61.9	56.8	61.1	58.3	66.7	61.1
No	17.3	19.9	25.6	20.0	17.2	18.0	21.6	17.2
DA/NA	21.8	21.2	12.5	23.2	21.7	23.7	20.7	21.7

Table 8.2. Depending on education

Variant of answer	Education				
	Elementary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Secondary vocational	Higher (incomplete higher)
Yes	49.2	62.7	60.3	62.5	68.0
No	12.9	18.1	17.7	20.1	14.7
DA/NA	37.9	19.3	22.0	17.4	17.3

Table 8.3. Depending on status

Variant of answer	Status				
	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector	Students	Pensioners	Unemployed, housewives
Yes	63.8	59.4	65.0	61.0	62.6
No	21.4	18.3	17.8	12.4	21.2
DA/NA	14.8	22.3	17.2	26.6	16.2

Table 8.4. Depending on place of living

Variant of answer	Area						
	Minsk	Minsk region	Brest and region	Grodno and region	Vitebsk and region	Mogilev and region	Gomel and region
Yes	50.8	56.6	72.7	62.3	63.3	60.0	62.4
No	24.2	13.6	17.8	12.6	19.2	18.6	14.0
DA/NA	25.0	29.8	9.5	25.1	17.5	21.4	23.6

Table 8.5. Depending on type of settlement

Variant of answer	Type of settlement				
	Capital	Regional centers	Cities	Towns	Village
Yes	50.8	70.3	52.9	65.2	62.1
No	24.2	12.0	16.7	18.1	16.4
DA/NA	25.0	17.7	30.4	16.7	21.5

9. Distribution of answers to the question: "What is your attitude towards the abolition of the Constitutional norm banning A. Lukashenko from being elected for the third consecutive term, and Russian capital taking part in privatization of Belarusian enterprises?"

Table 9.1. Depending on age

Variant of answer	All respondents	Age, years old						
		18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+up
Positive	23.7	18.1	11.1	12.2	18.7	15.4	27.6	42.0
Negative	58.0	72.5	78.6	77.0	66.5	63.6	55.1	31.5
DA/NA	18.3	9.4	10.4	10.8	14.8	21.0	17.3	26.5

Table 9.2. Depending on education

Variant of answer	Education				
	Elementary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Secondary vocational	Higher (incomplete higher)
Positive	37.6	41.0	21.2	16.3	13.7
Negative	27.0	38.1	61.8	69.3	75.7
DA/NA	35.4	20.9	17.0	14.4	10.6

Table 9.3. Depending on status

Variant of answer	Status				
	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector	Students	Pensioners	Unemployed, housewives
Positive	13.8	18.8	13.9	41.2	10.0
Negative	72.7	65.1	75.3	33.4	70.4
DA/NA	13.5	15.1	10.8	25.4	19.6

Table 9.4. Depending on place of living

Variant of answer	Area						
	Minsk	Minsk region	Brest and region	Grodno and region	Vitebsk and region	Mogilev and region	Gomel and region
Positive	23.8	25.8	18.1	11.5	23.5	34.4	28.3
Negative	58.7	37.8	64.3	74.7	60.6	52.6	60.7
DA/NA	17.5	36.4	17.6	13.8	15.9	13.0	11.0

Table 9.5. Depending on type of settlement

Variant of answer	Type of settlement				
	Capital	Regional centers	Cities	Towns	Village
Positive	23.8	17.1	19.3	23.6	29.7
Negative	58.7	71.1	49.3	57.4	54.7
DA/NA	17.5	11.8	31.4	19.0	15.6

10. Distribution of answers to the question: "The Chamber of Representatives has recently adopted the new edition of the law approving «the leading role of the Orthodox Church» in our country. Some people support it believing this is fair because the majority of Belarusian believers are Orthodox believers. Others speak out against it saying the law infringes upon the rights of other religions. What do you think about it?"

Table 10.1. Depending on age

Variant of answer	All respondents	Age, years old						
		18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+up
Orthodox Church shall be superior to other religions	33.6	22.9	27.6	20.6	30.0	34.8	37.3	42.3
All churches shall enjoy equal rights	57.7	74.2	63.6	67.8	61.5	56.8	54.5	48.3
DA/NA	8.7	2.9	8.8	11.6	8.5	8.4	8.2	9.4

Table 10.2. Depending on education

Variant of answer	Education				
	Elementary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Secondary vocational	Higher (incomplete higher)
Orthodox Church shall be superior to other religions	37.1	40.1	33.0	33.4	26.2
All churches shall enjoy equal rights	50.6	52.0	59.1	55.9	68.3
DA/NA	12.3	7.9	7.9	10.7	5.5

Table 10.3. Depending on status

Variant of answer	Status				
	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector	Students	Pensioners	Unemployed, housewives
Orthodox Church shall be superior to other religions	28.1	30.6	33.6	41.0	36.9
All churches shall enjoy equal rights	64.9	59.6	58.9	49.5	60.8
DA/NA	7.0	9.8	7.5	9.5	2.3

Table 10.4. Depending on place of living

Variant of answer	Area						
	Minsk	Minsk region	Brest and region	Grodno and region	Vitebsk and region	Mogilev and region	Gomel and region
Orthodox Church shall be superior to other religions	28.9	35.0	59.1	18.6	18.7	34.3	36.9
All churches shall enjoy equal rights	56.8	51.1	34.9	77.1	74.9	61.2	53.9
DA/NA	13.3	13.9	6.0	4.3	6.4	4.5	9.2

Table 10.5. Depending on type of settlement

Variant of answer	Type of settlement				
	Capital	Regional centers	Cities	Towns	Village
Orthodox Church shall be superior to other religions	28.9	36.7	26.4	27.8	41.4
All churches shall enjoy equal rights	56.8	58.8	57.2	66.9	51.6
DA/NA	13.3	4.5	16.4	5.3	7.0

11. Distribution of answers to the question: "Are you going to take part in the elections to local Councils?"

Table 11.1. Depending on age

Variant of answer	All respondents	Age, years old						
		18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+up
Yes	60.3	52.6	57.6	56.3	57.7	60.0	68.9	64.5
No	20.3	22.6	23.4	7.4	21.2	22.8	16.4	15.8

DA/NA	19.3	24.6	19.0	16.3	21.1	17.2	14.7	19.7
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Table 11.2. Depending on education

Variant of answer	Education				
	Elementary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Secondary vocational	Higher (incomplete higher)
Yes	54.5	60.3	58.2	59.1	71.5
No	21.3	20.8	20.9	22.1	14.8
DA/NA	24.2	18.9	20.8	18.8	13.7

Table 11.3. Depending on status

Variant of answer	Status				
	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector	Students	Pensioners	Unemployed, housewives
Yes	52.4	61.0	60.5	64.2	54.7
No	27.9	19.5	22.5	15.7	28.3
DA/NA	19.7	19.5	17.0	20.1	17.0

Table 11.4. Depending on place of living

Variant of answer	Area						
	Minsk	Minsk region	Brest and region	Grodno and region	Vitebsk and region	Mogilev and region	Gomel and region
Yes	54.1	62.6	71.1	70.2	49.0	50.4	64.6
No	21.9	14.7	18.1	14.5	27.3	27.8	18.9
DA/NA	24.0	22.7	10.8	15.3	23.7	21.8	16.5

Table 11.5. Depending on type of settlement

Variant of answer	Type of settlement				
	Capital	Regional centers	Cities	Towns	Village
Yes	54.1	67.5	63.5	56.0	60.6
No	21.9	16.2	15.6	25.1	20.6
DA/NA	24.0	16.3	20.9	18.9	18.8

12. Distribution of answers to the question: " If you are going to support a candidate of one of the parties, which in particular? " (only one answer is possible)

Table 12.1. Depending on age

Variant of answer	All respondents	Age, years old						
		18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+up
United Civic Party	3.6	3.0	4.4	3.1	4.3	5.5	4.3	1.3
BPF Adradzhennye	3.1	9.5	10.3	2.2	3.3	2.3	0.5	1.6
Conservative-Christian Party of BPF	2.9	7.5	1.7	5.2	2.8	3.8	2.5	1.4
BSDP Narodnaya Gramada	2.7	2.7	1.6	1.5	5.2	2.4	2.0	2.0
Labor Party	1.6	1.4	1.6	0.6	0.9	2.1	1.7	2.2
Women's Party Nadzeya	6.9	4.3	7.5	7.3	7.7	7.7	4.1	7.3
Belarusian Party of Communists	3.3	1.4	1.4	2.2	1.1	3.7	3.2	6.0
Liberal-Democratic Party	7.6	7.6	10.5	13.6	11.6	8.0	5.0	2.1
BSDG	2.9	4.6	2.4	5.7	1.3	4.1	4.3	1.6
Other party	2.9	1.5	3.1	2.4	3.3	2.2	5.0	2.3
DA/NA	62.5	56.5	55.5	56.2	58.5	58.1	67.4	72.2

Table 12.2. Depending on education

	Education
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Variant of answer	Elementary	Incomplete secondary	Secondary	Secondary vocational	Higher (incomplete higher)
United Civic Party	1.2	2.4	3.7	3.3	7.2
BPF Adradzhennye	1.5	1.1	3.2	4.6	3.9
Conservative-Christian Party of BPF	0	2.5	3.7	4.6	1.4
BSDP Narodnaya Gramada	1.3	1.0	3.3	2.6	3.8
Labor Party	2.6	2.1	1.4	1.7	1.0
Women's Party Nadzeya	4.5	6.8	7.8	7.0	6.9
Belarusian Party of Communists	5.5	3.6	2.7	2.0	4.2
Liberal-Democratic Party	1.3	5.4	7.8	9.9	11.0
BSDG	1.2	2.5	2.0	2.6	7.9
Other party	1.2	2.3	3.6	3.7	1.7
DA/NA	79.7	70.3	60.8	58.0	51.0

Table 12.3. Depending on status

Variant of answer	Status				
	Employees of the private sector	Employees of the public sector	Students	Pensioners	Unemployed, housewives
United Civic Party	4.9	4.7	4.2	1.4	1.8
BPF Adradzhennye	3.4	2.9	14.3	1.4	1.1
Conservative-Christian Party of BPF	3.1	3.2	3.1	1.6	5.8
BSDP Narodnaya Gramada	3.9	2.4	2.1	2.1	5.3
Labor Party	1.2	1.5	1.0	2.4	0.9
Women's Party Nadzeya	6.0	7.8	6.1	6.5	5.8
Belarusian Party of Communists	2.0	3.1	0	4.6	5.1
Liberal-Democratic Party	13.7	7.9	14.3	2.4	7.5
BSDG	4.0	3.0	3.3	2.4	1.7
Other party	4.0	3.1	2.1	2.4	1.3
DA/NA	53.8	60.5	49.5	72.8	63.7

Table 12.4. Depending on place of living

Variant of answer	Area						
	Minsk	Minsk region	Brest and region	Grodno and region	Vitebsk and region	Mogilev and region	Gomel and region
United Civic Party	4.8	2.0	1.8	8.2	2.1	3.2	4.0
BPF Adradzhennye	2.5	0.8	8.4	2.6	4.3	1.4	1.9
Conservative-Christian Party of BPF	6.1	2.5	1.2	6.8	1.0	1.3	1.7
BSDP Narodnaya Gramada	2.1	1.8	0.7	2.3	3.6	4.2	4.1
Labor Party	2.2	0.7	1.6	0.8	0	2.4	3.5
Women's Party Nadzeya	6.7	4.4	5.2	6.7	5.3	8.7	11.6
Belarusian Party of Communists	2.4	6.7	5.4	2.0	1.3	1.8	2.2
Liberal-Democratic Party	4.4	6.1	13.7	6.9	4.2	9.7	9.2
BSDG	4.2	4.9	0.9	5.4	0.6	2.0	2.5
Other party	1.6	3.3	3.1	5.0	3.5	0.9	2.9
DA/NA	63.0	66.8	63.0	53.3	74.1	64.3	56.4

Table 12.5. Depending on type of settlement

Variant of answer	Type of settlement				
	Capital	Regional centers	Cities	Towns	Village
United Civic Party	4.8	2.4	2.6	5.9	2.8
BPF Adradzhennye	2.5	5.4	1.3	1.9	3.9
Conservative-Christian Party of BPF	6.1	1.5	2.2	2.1	3.0
BSDP Narodnaya Gramada	2.1	4.6	0.8	0.5	4.1
Labor Party	2.2	1.9	1.1	2.0	1.2

Women's Party Nadzeya	6.7	6.5	4.5	3.6	10.6
Belarusian Party of Communists	2.4	2.3	3.9	4.3	3.2
Liberal-Democratic Party	4.4	6.9	6.0	7.4	8.4
BSDG	4.2	5.4	3.9	2.2	3.1
Other party	1.6	2.1	4.6	0.9	4.5
DA/NA	63.0	61.0	69.1	69.2	55.2

**Trends of change in Belarusian public opinion
about some socio-economic and political problems**
(based on results of IISEPS's national opinion polls, %)

Table 1. Structure of aggregated indicator of attitude towards A. Lukashenko

Indexes of attitude	Mentioned A. Lukashenko (Option A)							Did not mention A. Lukashenko (Option B)						
	11'97	09'98	11'99	11'00	10'01	04'02	09'02	11'97	09'98	11'99	11'00	10'01	04'02	09'02
Would vote for A. Lukashenko at a new presidential election	44.3	52.2	43.8	38.2	46.0	30.9	27.0	55.7	47.8	56.2	61.8	54.0	69.1	73.0
Would vote for A. Lukashenko at an election of Russia-Belarus president	35.2	44.7	31.6	27.5	26.4	14.0	15.0	64.8	55.3	68.4	72.5	73.6	86.0	85.0
Trust the president	45.0	48.0	39.8	36.0	44.5	32.4	36.1	22.5 ¹	22.1 ¹	32.5 ¹	37.6 ¹	39.5 ¹	50.1 ¹	44.2 ¹
Consider A. Lukashenko an ideal	50.4	51.5	44.9	37.5	36.8	26.0	23.2	49.6	48.5	55.1	62.5	63.2	74.0	76.8

Table 2. Dynamics of electoral types

Electoral types	11'97	09'98	11'99	11'00	10'01	04'02	09'02
Convinced supporters of A. Lukashenko (chose option A while answering all four questions)	26.0	29.3	22.3	18.5	20.2	10.4	10.7
Vacillatory	53.2	53.3	49.5	49.1	43.9	42.7	48.0
Convinced opponents of A. Lukashenko (chose option B while answering all four questions)	20.8	17.4	28.2	32.5	35.9	46.9	41.3

Table 3. Confidence in mass media

Variant of answer	11'97	09'98	11'99	11'00	10'01	04'02	09'02
State-run mass media							
– trust	43.7	41.8	32.2	34.3	40.4	38.7	34.6
– distrust	21.0	26.0	34.7	36.0	42.4	43.1	45.2
Non-state mass media							
– trust	25.4	19.6	34.4	23.7	31.9	32.2	32.2
– distrust	24.1	32.6	26.1	35.9	42.1	43.9	40.8

Table 4. The most attractive, corresponding to an ideal politicians

Politician ¹	11'97	09'98	11'99	11'00	10'01	04'02	09'02
V. Putin	– ²	– ²	– ²	51.8	65.2	68.1	66.9
A. Lukashenko	50.4	51.5	44.9	37.5	36.8	26.0	23.2
G. Schroeder	– ²	– ²	16.0	9.1	12.6	14.3	13.2
G. W. Bush Jr	– ²	– ²	– ²	– ²	7.7	8.5	8.5
F. Castro	8.3	10.8	14.7	9.7	9.4	7.9	9.5
J. Chirac	9.5	9.9	– ²	11.3	8.6	9.3	9.4
T. Blair	– ²	2.3	6.7	6.8	8.0	10.2	8.8

A. Kwasniewski	2.9	5.3	7.9	5.8	4.6	7.4	5.6
V. Havel	3.6	4.7	8.0	4.3	4.3	5.3	3.3
S. Hussein	— ²	3.8	6.0	3.3	3.2	1.5	3.2
V. Adamkus	— ²	1.2	7.2	1.9	2.5	4.6	3.1

¹ Other politicians received less than 3% of votes

² Names of the given politicians were not offered in the polls indicated

Table 5. Do you think our country develops in the right or a wrong direction?

Variant of answer	10'01	04'02	09'02
In the right direction	36.7	21.4	21.3
In a wrong directions	38.1	55.5	49.1

Table 6. The most pressing problems facing the country and the population

(more than one answer is possible)

Problems	09'98	06'99	11'99	08'00	11'00	09'02
Rise in prices	74.7	82.7	80.2	76.7	81.2	71.9
Impoverishment of the population	49.7	73.2	78.0	68.4	71.4	60.6
Unemployment	28.5	35.7	43.3	36.8	38.9	49.4
Setback in production	23.5	31.8	36.1	31.3	29.3	38.7
Crime	26.7	44.6	41.8	44.2	41.6	35.3
Corruption, bribery	21.8	29.7	37.5	31.4	32.8	27.8
Lack of order, law	20.0	24.6	27.8	28.1	27.7	27.4
Human rights violation	9.9	23.3	28.0	27.5	27.6	25.2
Overcoming the consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe	20.2	29.5	28.8	23.4	21.6	19.7
International isolation	8.8	9.1	10.2	8.6	8.2	14.4
Threat to Belarus' independence	— ¹	— ¹	— ¹	— ¹	7.2	10.2
Decay of national culture	— ¹	13.1	14.3	12.2	13.9	10.2
Split of the society	— ¹	5.0	10.2	7.2	7.2	5.2
Threat of the West	2.7	9.3	9.4	5.4	4.9	3.6

¹ the given answer was not offered

Table 7. Are you satisfied with A. Lukashenko's ruling?

Variant of answer	08'00	11'00	04'01	08'01	09'02
Rather dissatisfied	41.6	36.3	33.8	15.5	36.5
Partially satisfied, partially dissatisfied	40.5	42.9	46.9	40.5	46.9
Rather satisfied	17.6	20.3	18.3	26.5	12.9

Table 8. Change of economic situation in Belarus over the last year

Variant of answer	06'96	06'97	11'99	08'00	11'00	10'01	04'02	09'02
Has improved	8.3	18.7	8.5	5.9	9.7	17.8	7.7	5.9
Has not changed	28.8	30.2	23.9	29.1	38.9	47.4	33.2	37.8
Has deteriorated	61.9	51.0	67.4	63.5	50.9	29.2	55.5	50.0

Table 9. How has your life and the life of your family changed since 1994?

Variant of answer	04'01	08'01	10'01	09'02
Has changed for the better	11.8	18.1	22.8	13.8
Has not changed	27.7	34.6	34.2	33.1
Has changed for the worse	50.7	40.7	38.3	48.5

Table 10. Average income (including wages, pensions and other incomes) for one family members last month

Variant of answer	04'00	11'00	04'01	10'01	04'02	09'02
Below the living wage budget	68.2	65.8	54.2	44.9	49.9	49.5

From the living wage budget to the minimum consumer budget	20.6	22.1	32.3	34.7	31.1	32.7
From the minimum consumer budget to \$100	7.4	9.3	10.8	14.0	14.8	12.2
From \$100 and up	1.8	1.6	1.8	5.8	4.2	5.6

Table 11. Would you wish your children do private business, engage in private enterprise?

Variant of answer	11'99	04'00	08'00	09'02
Yes	38.1	39.9	40.6	52.0
No	26.0	24.9	24.5	28.1

Table 12. Would you like to emigrate to a different country?

Variant of answer	11'99	06'00	11'00	10'01	04'02	09'02
Would not like moving anywhere	61.2	68.5	60.1	52.0	50.3	54.6
Germany	15.2	9.3	14.1	18.5	16.5	13.3
United States	11.5	9.8	11.1	6.1	9.4	8.6
Poland	3.9	1.7	3.1	5.8	4.6	5.7
Russia	1.3	2.6	3.2	3.6	4.9	4.3
Baltic States	1.8	0.9	1.3	1.8	1.8	1.7
Other country	4.7	6.2	7.1	6.3	4.2	4.7

Table 13. Language of everyday use

Variant of answer	06'95	11'97	09'98	11'99	11'00	10'01	04'02	09'02
Belarusian	4.5	5.7	2.9	4.1	4.2	1.7	2.6	5.4
Russian	37.3	40.6	39.2	39.0	37.6	46.3	46.3	44.2
Both Russian and Belarusian	7.8	20.3	22.7	23.1	25.7	20.9	19.9	21.2
Mixed	50.0	32.5	33.6	33.3	31.3	30.0	31.1	25.4
Other	0.4	0.8	0.5	0.2	0.7	0.1	0.1	0.2

OPEN FORUM

END TO STAGING AND BEGINNING OF INTEGRATION?

Alexander Fadeyev, Doctor of Historical Science, Professor

V. Putin's well-known September address, as we see it, proved rather unexpected for the Belarusian leadership and caused certain confusion. On the whole, A. Lukashenko reacted negatively at the document, he could not hide his painful irritation and dissatisfaction with Russia's proposals, which he called "abnormal". But, as we see it, this definition the Belarus president applied only to two variants of the integration offered by Moscow: the incorporation of Belarus (and its regions) into the Russian Federation and the unification by the EU model. In any case, there are reasons to say that the next round of Belarus-Russia relations began with complications; the tension in the dialog of the two leaders has not been overcome, but heightened.

A. Lukashenko persistently declares the thesis about the invariability of Minsk's course for fulfillment of the 1999 treaty on creation of the Union State "without changes". The Kremlin, however, quite fairly detected in the draft Constitutional Act of the Union State submitted by the Belarusian side a clear and threatening deviation from the spirit and the letter of the given intergovernmental document in the form of approval of an unconditional right to secession. Aside from that, when two years later politicians, public figures, organizations and mass media refer to the topic of the Russia-Belarus integration trying to gain an understanding of who and what impedes the establishment of the Union State, a common economic space, an election to the Union Parliament,

etc., they have always forgotten the main thing. The matter is that two years after the 1999 treaty was signed it has not come into force. The reason is that Article 61 of the document, which reads that the treaty takes effect only after "fulfillment of all necessary domestic procedures to change the Constitutions of each member-state". Neither Russia, nor Belarus have introduced amendments to their national Constitutions to "find proper place" for the Union State.

Moreover, in August Moscow for the first time publicly declared what has already been clear for Russian experts – the unification with Belarus is possible only without changing the Constitution of the Russian Federation. In such path of the reunification Belarus' interests and its statehood are considered as secondary, of little importance.

The Kremlin, of course, was irritated with constant and persistent requests from the side of the Belarus Presidential Administration to grant new credits, privileges and preferences. But the fatal mistake of the Belarusian president in the framework of the dialog with Moscow, in our opinion, was the simultaneous "promotion" of the problem of the national budget losing huge revenues (the figure of \$200m a year was cited) as a result of the Russian government's intrigues. Another figure of Russia's indebtedness to Belarus – \$1 billion – was also referred to. The declared claims for a special status of the republic in trade-economic relations with Russia aggravated the situation. The issue of Belarus' state debt could shortly go beyond the framework of bilateral relations demanding arbitration from the side of international institutions, and imposing certain political limits on Belarus (aside from economic sanctions). So far the Belarusian political elite has not bothered to choose a possible strategy to manage the structure of state debt – minimization of expenses or the principle of minimizing risks. Having proclaimed the idea of "a social state", the Belarus government tried to uphold a third model in the policy of foreign borrowing (the "zero variant", etc.), which seems unacceptable for its creditors, and first of all for Russia.

Obviously, at present attractiveness of an economic rapprochement with Belarus to a great degree is lost for Russia. However, Russia is still interested in the development of the air defense system in the western direction using the potential of the Belarusian side. Nonetheless, the Belarusian leadership has so far expressed no intention of strengthening and developing the partnership in the military field. The Belarus president in every way declines signing with the Russian side a prepared and approved a couple of years ago agreement on creation of a joint air defense system. How could Russia's state-political leadership, Defense Minister S. Ivanov, whose two visits to Minsk failed, react at this situation? The answer is obvious.

Moscow was bewildered by the attempt of the Belarusian head of state to rehabilitate the policy and traditions of the relations between Russian and Belarusian power elites of the B. Yeltsin era. That is simply impossible: the era of staging pompous state acts paying no attention to Russia's national, financial-economic interests and foreign relations consequences, discredited itself and is gone, and there is no point in speculating on the issue. No populist models of the integration of Russia and Belarus, if they are not justified in terms of finance, military-strategic or practical state interests, would be accepted by the present Russian leadership. Thus, A. Lukashenko's efforts – in the spirit of Sibylla's prophecy – to mention what has already happened in the future time are in vain.

In mid September the contradictions between the Russian and the Belarusian sides on the problem of unification of the two countries became more acute. The Union Council of Ministers failed to answer two major questions expected to be solved at its session on September 17–18: what are the prospects of the draft Constitutional Act of the Union State and the future of an accelerated variant to introduce the union currency in the form of the Russian ruble. M. Kasyanov and Belarusian Premier G. Novitsky preferred not to consider the first document having no intention of intensifying the present political conflict of the two presidents, who have so far failed to find common grounds regarding models of the integration. As for moving the deadline of Belarus' adoption of the Russian ruble starting January 1, 2004, no understanding was found. The Belarusian delegation rejected the proposal of their Russian colleagues to make the Russian Central Bank the common emission center (what would have been logical, since the adoption of the Russian ruble, not Belarusian ruble, is suggested). As a result, a new working group to "work out the issue in detail" was set up. It is expected to formulate recommendations to the national governments by December this year.

What causes great concern is not just the cancellation of the June session of the Union Council of Ministers in the context of transition of Belarus and Russia to the single currency – the Russian

ruble, but the fact that the Belarusian side is not ready to discuss the problem of the single currency of the Union State as such at any moment. Such approach reveals Minsk's clear aspirations to assume no responsibility on plausible pretexts in terms of fulfilling the previously signed agreement on transition to the single currency by 2008. Russia's president reacted promptly. At a special press conference for the mass media of the Krasnodarsky Krai in Sochi V. Putin emphasized that there was no point in discussing the concept of several emission centers empowered to print the Russian ruble, brought to Moscow by the Belarusian delegation: there could only be one emission center – in Moscow. In this respect – as V. Putin put it – today the question is "whether we want the ruble to be the single currency, or not!"

Moreover, the head of the Russian state "corrected" his own proposal of August 14 about the desirable accession of the Belarusian regions to the Russian Federation as its subjects and on the basis of the Russian Constitutions. This time he suggests the whole Belarus becoming part of Russia in line with the Russian Constitution (!). Strangely enough, V. Putin believes that such categorical declarations do not aggravate the situation, do not drive the relations with the Belarusian authorities into a deadlock by such rigid stance. To be objective, it is hard to accept such "partner-like, comradely" approach, which, from the point of view of the Russian president, allows only a discussion on certain moments, details (and that's it). The Belarus president, of course, does not agree with V. Putin's plan. And several hours later at the September 17 press conference in Minsk he says about it in a peculiar way. According to him, God determined the place of Belarus in Europe, in the common house... Belarus is ready for any unions, any agreements only (here A. Lukashenko made a stress) on equal conditions, the Belarusian leadership would not allow to "deceive" itself in terms of a currency union with Russia, to make Belarus dependent on foreign currency, including the Russian ruble, because that would mean an end of its sovereignty. M. Kasyanov's public address to A. Lukashenko to react at V. Putin's initiative about the accelerated introduction of the single currency starting January 1, 2004, only angered the Belarusian president (as he put it).

We shall not omit another important aspect. On the eve of the president's press conference through all available information channels the Belarusian Presidential Administration persistently tried to draw wide public attention to the event presented as a special, an epochal one. Meanwhile, during the meeting of A. Lukashenko with representatives of mass media in the Palace of the Republic and answers to questions by Belarusian citizens we heard no revelations or novations from his side in the sphere of politics, economics or any other sphere. Speaking a plain language Alexander Grigoryevich [Lukashenko] once again stated the well known position of the republican "cabinet" on the issues of domestic and foreign policy. Mass media leaders, journalists were, of course, gathered for other reasons. The whole event was organized, first of all, to publicly declare A. Lukashenko's claims for the third presidential term by the formula: referendum – changing the Constitution – election. Why four years before the completion of A. Lukashenko's presidency the Belarusians authorities decided to make public the plan of prolonging the powers of the head of state, which – according to the Belarusian Constitution – run out in September 2006? In our opinion, that is an unambiguous reply of A. Lukashenko to V. Putin's address, a mirror-like response to the formula offered to the Belarusian side by Russia's president: referendum in Belarus and Russia – common Parliament of the Union State – common Union Government – common president of the Union State.

Thus, Belarus President A. Lukashenko not only rejected the initiative of the Russian president, but also added to his actions the well known ideological, program appearance, for which he has always had a bent. His statements were accompanied, for example, by arguments of an inevitable union between Russians and Belarusians in the future ("not under Lukashenko, Putin"), which, probably, is to guard the ruling Belarusian elite from potential accusations from the side of Russia of defection and betrayal of ideals of the Belarus-Russia Union, an obvious rebellious character. For that purpose Minsk presented the idea of creating the Union State as a model of equal interstate formation realized in sustainable, and what is of great importance, objectively reproduced forms of little dependence on the will of the present leaders of Russia and Belarus. Meanwhile, the practice of bilateral relations between the two countries over the recent years proves the opposite – there is no integration without agreements on the "top", consent of the two presidents. On the whole, coming back to the ideologamme of A. Lukashenko, we shall consider other of its aspects – the supposed availability of all social categories of the Union State to direct administrative influence, as well as a

long period for final resolution of all arising questions, first of all, resolution of the problem of powers for national elites.

At the same time considering A. Lukashenko's statement that Belarus would never initiate the destruction of the Union (that is what the Kremlin allegedly strives for) only as a method of political demagoguery seems unreasonable. The Belarusian president and his entourage, probably, are ready to be loyal to the Russian leadership, but are unable to take in the evident threat to their political present and future, considering V. Putin's address and other of his integration statements as a manifestation of Moscow's plot, a dangerous precedent of attempt at their powers, and finally undermining its economic might. Shall we be surprised at the painful reaction by the Belarusian elite, because Russia's initiatives took it unawares, and there was no time for the republican leadership to carefully plan reasonable countermeasures.

From our point of view, any concept of the unification of the two countries objectively presupposes restructuring of the top echelon of state officials, first of all in Belarus. But that does not mean an automatic liquidation of this "caste", which, as we understand from V. Putin's silence on the issue, is deprived of the right to play a role in governing the Union State. Anyway, this problem has no simple solution and demands not so much political courage, as a balanced approach, eradication of the "paternalist" attitude to the Belarus ruling class from the side of Russia. In many respects Belarusian top officials still perceive political reality symbolically, but today neither Russia's president, nor the Russian premier show them demonstrative signs of trust thereby depriving representatives of the ruling Belarusian elite of hopes for representation in the framework of the Union State.

In many respects the Moscow and Sochi initiatives of the Russian president do not take into account the specific character of philosophy and methods of functioning of the Belarusian state machine. Meanwhile, for the eleven years of Belarus' independence the corporation of Belarusian top managers has managed to consolidate in public consciousness the leading idea regarding its eastern neighbor: the main thing in this respect – differences, not similarities. Moreover, the practical activity of the Belarusian state machine is based on its opposition to Russia's visions of the state and its economy, Russian methodology of governing. And the Belarusian model of state is depicted as an ideal one, and Russia's state and social-economic structure – as a mistaken one leading to chaos and disintegration of the Federation. Contemporary ideology of the ruling class, as we know, opposes the Belarusian mode of life and those features of Russia, which made Europe and the world to respect and admire it for centuries: faithfulness of Russians to their loyal duty and financial obligations, valor of the Russian army, courage and bravery of its warriors, belief in great destination of their Motherland.

Minsk politicians prefer not to think about the fact that small countries, and Belarus is considered a small country, have objectively never been and are unable to be independent in their policy – they are only relatively independent. Aside from that, in the framework of integration the republican bureaucracy, the peculiar party of power is concerned about the possibility of changing of its present condition when, in fact, no one accounts for himself and his undertakings, and the bureaucratic corporation covers officials, protects its might with solidarity and carefully conceals sins and flaws of its members.

Therefore, the idea about Belarus' accession to the Russian Federation as a subject (on the basis of the Russian Constitution) certainly seems unacceptable to the ruling class of the republic. In this case, shall V. Putin repeatedly state the unacceptable variant of the integration with Belarus? Most probably this is the deadlock on the way of the reunion of Belarus and Russia against which the Russian president warned in Sochi.

Since this past summer Belarus has entered the period of serious ordeals, which is to be accompanied not only by a more active policy of maneuvering between the leading world powers and groups of states, but also search for a foreign policy counterbalance to the Kremlin increasing its pressure and trying to build its relations with Minsk based on its own vision of the integration priorities. Most probably, Russia's leadership will continue pursuing the irredentist course towards the republic regardless of its obligations under the 1999 Union treaty. We shall emphasize that this is the determinative moment in the situation around the future of the Union State, and since there are no supporters of further concessions to President A. Lukashenko in V. Putin's entourage, the further scenario of Russia-Belarus relations might follow the path of open categorical declarations

(although being ritual gestures), accompanied by encouraging actions to support possible successors of the Belarusian president, including "Russian Belarusians".

On the whole, we shall state that at present the presidents of Russia and Belarus are more concerned about satisfaction of their power ambitions than the problem of further development of the unification process. So far there have been no political concept of the reintegration considering all major interests of the parties, which could be taken seriously. In this respect the role of the parliaments and the people of Russia and Belarus remains secondary having no influence on the integration efforts. In addition, the crisis in the relations between the leaders of Russia and Belarus is more dangerous for A. Lukashenko and his political future: probably, a new head of the republic will be appointed not in Minsk, but in another place.

BOOKSHELF

Pavel Severinets. "MALADY FRONT GENERATION. History of youth born in 1970–1985".
Minsk, 2002., 89 p.

In late September Malady Front leader P. Severinets presented his book "Malady Front generation. History of youth born in 1970–85." The book, of course, is of great interest both as the first attempt to analyze the activity of the public organization Malady Front and as a view of its present leader, who stood at the origins of the organization, on its past and prospects.

The book consists of five parts. The first part is devoted to the period of 1985–1995. It describes the influence of the break-up of the totalitarian Soviet state, Belarus' gaining independence, "perestroika," glasnost, establishment of political parties, etc. upon the formation and making of youth. During that period public youth organizations were created and youth factions of the political parties were formed. In 1992 the youth faction of the Belarusian Popular Front Adradzhennye was established and in several months it originated an independent public youth organization Malady Front.

Parts 2–4 are devoted to the description of Malady Front's formation and activity from 1996 through 2000. They narrate in detail the actions of Malady Front by years, and analyze activities of other Belarusian youth organizations.

Defining the genre of his work, the author emphasizes that this is neither "belles-lettres, nor chronicles, nor publicism. This is the history." The history, which, in our opinion, is described somewhat emotionally. And there is nothing to be surprised at, because the author of the book is an immediate participant and organizer of most described events and actions. That is why the work is valuable, this is the history from "first hands."

Many ideas of the author are disputable and need additional argumentation. For example, in his opinion "Belarusization without God – is hollow. Belarusian form, state and national features, language and culture are destined for a Christian content... The true independence – is when people believe in God and love Belarus" ... "The true Belarusian movement is uniquely Christian in its essence. It becomes apparent from our sacred symbols – white-red-white flag of Christ, a white sheet with stains of blood of crucified Jesus, spiritual hymn "Mighty Lord," "Pagonya" and the advantage of Belarusian spirit over all occupations, wars, empires and dictatorships." Malady Front's program is mainly based on a Christian idea, but it is not clear how it affects the concrete activity of this organization, which, in our opinion, is a strong group of pressure upon absolutely all branches of power. Sometimes the author is categorical in his estimation of the events described and their influence on the development of political situation in Belarus. Nonetheless, the book is of great interest to experts in the sphere of youth movement (sociologists, pedagogues, psychologists, historians), because it gives a detailed idea of the history of the formation and activities of one of the most influential youth organizations in Belarus – Malady Front. In this respect the book is unique. Also it could be of great interest to young adults having no definite social position yet.

Irina Burina, IISEPS expert

**REGULATION OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS
№1174 of August 29, 2002.**

*on activity related to conducting researches and publishing results of public opinion polls
concerning the public-political situation in the country, national referenda and elections*

In order to regulate conducting researches and publishing results of public opinion polls related to the public-political situation in the country, national referenda and elections, the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus decrees:

1. to establish that conducting researches and publishing results of public opinion polls related to national referenda, elections of the President of the Republic of Belarus, deputies of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus and the public-political situation in the country is to be carried out by legal entities accredited with the Opinion Poll Commission at the National Academy of Sciences.

2. to appoint Doctor of Sociological Studies, Professor Igor Kotlyarov the head of the Opinion Poll Commission at the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Belarus.

3. the Opinion Poll Commission at the National Academy of Sciences shall within a three-month period determine conditions and procedure for accreditation (recognition of powers) of legal entities claiming to conduct activities related to the regulation of carrying out researches and publishing results of public opinion polls concerning national referenda, elections of the President of the Republic of Belarus, deputies of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus and the public-political situation in the country.

Prime Minister of the Republic of Belarus

CONFIRMED

Regulation of the
Council of Ministers of the
Republic of Belarus
№707 of May 31, 2002

REGULATION

**On the Opinion Poll Commission
at the National Academy of Sciences
(extractions)**

4. An association carrying public opinion poll on social and political situation in the country, on referenda or election in the country is to send to the Commission a written notice and commitment to observe during polling the legislation and the procedure of sociological studies, of processing and analysis of the sociological information. The commitment should also contain information about the association carrying the opinion poll and its client, sources of financing the opinion poll, time and conditions of its carrying out. Information requirements are determined by the Commission.

5. If the opinion poll data is published, the association that carried the opinion poll is to present additional information into the Commission on the polling subject, methods of information gathering, criteria of respondents selection, full list of the posed questions with the number of the respondents on each not answered question, copies of the information quality assurance protocols if quality assurance was carried and also published poll based material.

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